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A HOME IN THE WOODS

Oliver Johnson's

*Reminiscences of
Early Marion County*

As Related By

HOWARD JOHNSON

Indianapolis

INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

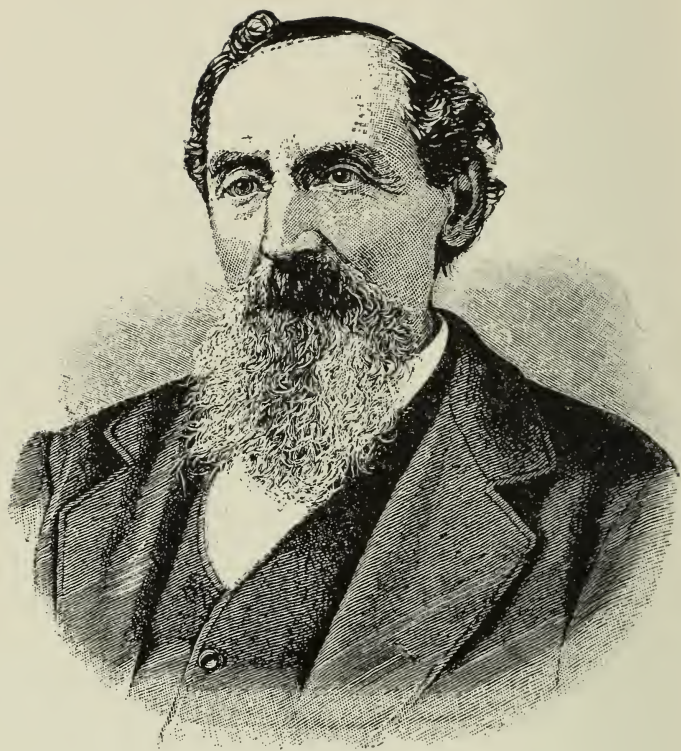
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INDIANA
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It is comparatively easy, when driving through Brown County, to imagine Indians and wild animals lurking in the wooded hills. It is something else to realize that a large part of Indianapolis was once forested, that Fall Creek had no bridges, that grist mills dotted the suburban areas, that a bear was chased down Thirty-eighth Street, and that children could get lost in going from the east side of the present State Fairgrounds over to a log school on Central Avenue.

In the belief that members of the Society will enjoy an authentic account of what life was like in the capital "city" in the 1820's and 1830's, the Committee on Publications is pleased to offer Howard Johnson's report of his grandfather's reminiscences of early Marion County.

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN I was a youngster, my family lived in part of my grandfather's big house, and my father operated his farm. It was located along modern Central Avenue, in Indianapolis, between Forty-second and Forty-sixth streets. This was not my grandfather's original farm. He had come into Marion County in 1822 as a baby, with his parents and grandparents, and had grown up on the family farm located on what is now the Indiana State Fairgrounds. The Johnsons were among the earliest settlers in the county and have seen their farms absorbed by the expanding capital city.

According to family tradition, Jeremiah Johnson of Virginia married Jane Lawson after the Revolution and migrated in the wake of the Boones to Bryant's Station in Kentucky with two slaves. There several of their ten children were born, including a son John on January 1, 1798. Apparently preferring free soil, the family left its slaves behind and moved into Indiana Territory shortly after it was created in 1800. They settled a few miles north of Harrison, Ohio-Indiana, just within the line. There John Johnson grew up, met Sarah Pursel, daughter of Peter Pursel, of Brookville, and married her about 1818. A daughter was born to them in 1819.

In 1818 the central section of Indiana was cleared of Indian title, and the savages were allowed three years in which to move out. So in 1821 this New Purchase was opened for settlement. At the same time the state legislature, meeting at Corydon, had created a commission to locate a new capital closer to the geographical center of the new state. The commission's choice of the White River-Fall Creek junction was approved in January, 1821.

Early in the spring of that year, Jeremiah Johnson and three of his sons, John, Tom, and Jerry, traveled to the site of the new capital and found half a dozen cabins already

erected. Jeremiah and sons Tom and Jerry located land about two miles north, in the vicinity of Martindale Avenue and Nineteenth Street today. John Johnson decided to bring his wife and small daughter to an eighty-acre tract on the west bank of Fall Creek which later became the State Fairgrounds. The four men cleared a patch of land on the father's farm and planted corn. They also built a cabin during the summer and cleared more land. In the fall, after shucking the corn, they returned to their families near Harrison ready to make the move. John Johnson found he had a new son, born November 21, 1821. He was named Oliver and is the grandfather of whom I spoke in the beginning. The family moved to their farm near Indianapolis in March, 1822. Thus my grandfather literally grew up with the city.

Grandfather was fifty-two when I was born, and lived to be eighty-six years old. Consequently, I knew him well as a boy and man. He was never too busy or too tired to refuse his grandchildren a story, or to make us almost anything we wanted to play with. This led us to think that "grandpa" was the most wonderful man in the world. He could make the best wagons and sleds you ever saw. He made bows and arrows for us that would kill squirrels and rabbits. He showed us how to make Indian suits and moccasins, how to trap and skin and tan hides, how to make fringe for hunting shirts and leggins.

Then when the fierce storms rolled up from the west, and it got so dark and the lightning flashed and the thunder and wind shook the big frame house, and we were frightened, he would pull us up on to his lap and tell us stories. Also, with his big hands he could rub away almost any pain or ache; especially pains associated with green-apple time.

As we grew up our association changed. When we couldn't work the ground because of wet weather, he took us on hunting and fishing trips. He also let me use his tools and help him make things in his shop. But I got the greatest thrill of all listening to his tales of "old times," as he called them.

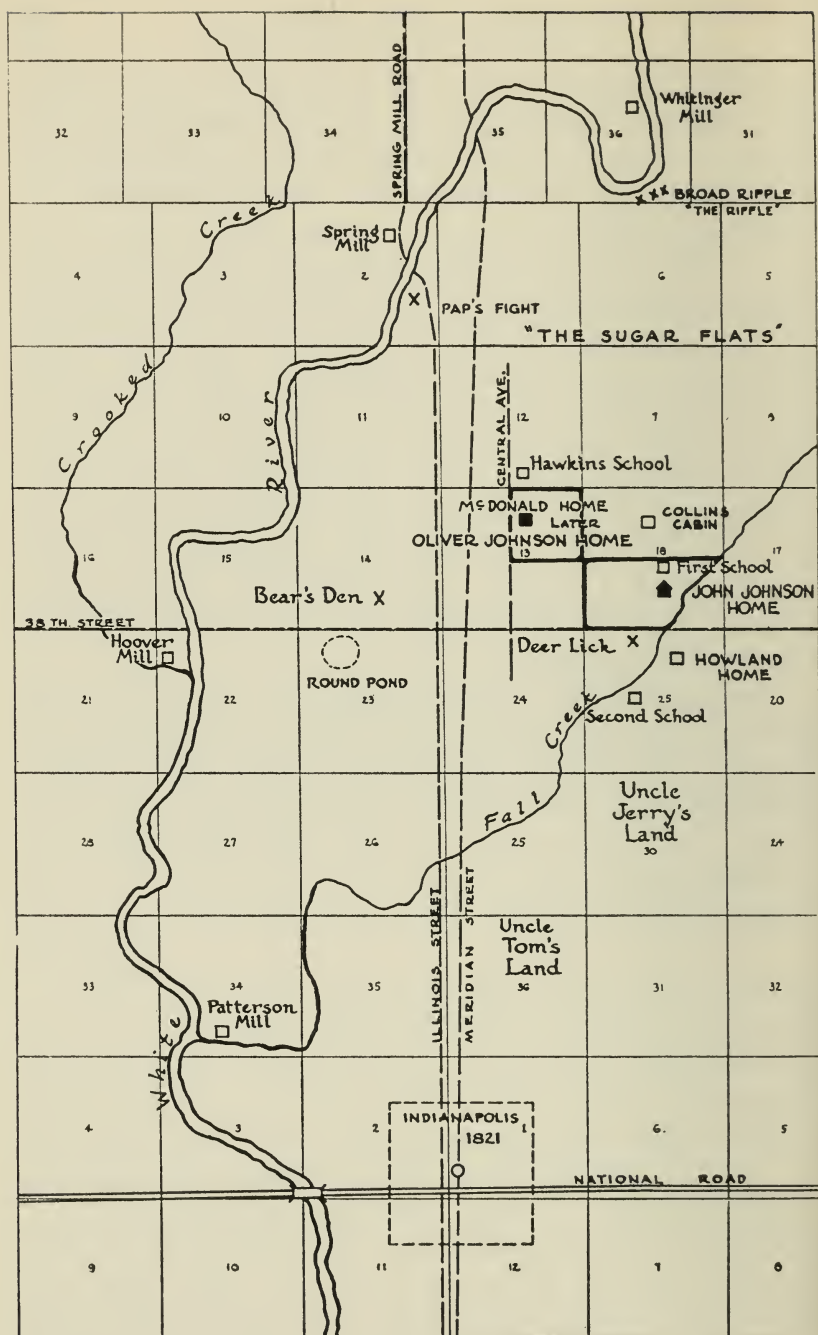
After I was grown and married and living in part of his house and operating his farm, as my father had done before me, we would spend evenings going over those same old stories with renewed zeal. It was then that I conceived the idea of writing them down.

In 1907 I moved my family from grandfather's house to a farm on Seventy-ninth Street where I still live. Here I repeated to some extent my grandfather's experience of clearing land, plowing new ground, building fences, etc. Recently, I built myself a log cabin in the woods in the pioneer manner. Grandfather's stories meant more to me now, as I had a better understanding of what he meant. Persuaded to rewrite them in sequence and as if he himself were speaking, I turned out the following pages. Through the encouragement of my nephew, Albert L. Fessler, and the generous interest of the Indiana Historical Society they are now available in print. I am grateful to both.

Since grandfather is the narrator, he is the "I" of the account. "Pap" is his father, John Johnson (1798-1854), and "mother" is his mother, Sarah Pursel Johnson (1802-1848). "Grandpap" is Jeremiah Johnson, whose dates are not known.

HOWARD JOHNSON

INDIANAPOLIS



CHAPTER 1

THE ENDLESS TREES

IT's hard to picture this part of the country as I first remember it. Here and there was a cabin home with a little spot of clearin close by. The rest of the country was jist one great big woods for miles and miles in most every direction. From your cabin you could see no farther than the wall of trees surroundin the clearin; not another cabin in sight.

You might think it a lonesome place to live, but it wasn't to us. Bein brought up in the woods we didn't know any other life. Then another thing helped: families was big them days. With twelve of us children in the family there was always plenty of entertainment. As for the woods itself there wasn't a lonesome spot in it. There was plenty of wild life at all times to keep a feller company. There was where we got our supply of meat, and there was where we got our greatest pastime and pleasure—huntin. There was where we got our buildin timber for cabins, timber to make ox yokes, chairs and tables, fence rails, and lots of other things. Firewood was there jist for the gettin.

On the land layin between Fall Crick and White River was some of the finest timber you ever saw. Big walnut and sugar trees mostly. The settlers used to call this section of the county the Sugar Flats, on account of the many big fine sugar trees. Lots of them showed the scars where the Indians had tapped them in the springtime for sugar. Other trees were gray and blue ash, white, burr, and pin oak, all good buildin timber. There was no red or jack oak to speak of in our parts, but there was plenty of beech, wild cherry, mulberry, hackberry, and pignut hickory, though very few shellbark hickory.

Yellow poplar, the finest buildin timber of all, grew mostly on the high ground over toward White River. Some poplars got as big as four and five feet through. I helped cut a big

poplar tree when I was grown up that made a rail fence forty rod long and nine rails high. There was three kinds of elm trees: the water elm, now we call it the American elm; the red elm, that's the one where you get the slippery elm bark; and the hickory elm that grew tall and straight without any lower limbs and made mighty good buildin timbers, too. On the bottom land was the big sycamores, the soft maples, and the box elders. Then there was the smaller trees, such as red and black haws, wild plum, redbud, dogwood, buckeye, and the pawpaw which bore such good fruit.

There was also a second growth of saplings of all kinds strugglin along under the big trees tryin to take their place. Growin close to the ground was the spice bush, prickly ash, leatherwood, hazel bushes, wahoo, and others. Great patches of May apple, turkey peas, bloodroot, wild onions, ginseng, big ferns, and dozens of other wild flowers carpeted the ground. Masses of wild grapevine clung to the trees, some of them as much as eight or ten inches through and wound around a half dozen trees or so. In the more open spots grew wild rye and wild pea vine. The deer liked to feed on these vines, and they made good grazin for the settlers' cows also, both summer and winter. Them and what leaves and twigs the horses and cows browsed took the place of hay, for there was no grass anywhere and none raised till we got more ground cleared than needed for corn. The trees and bushes made such a dense shade in the summer that grass couldn't grow. In the winter time the snow would sometimes lodge on the branches, leavin the ground bare, except for leaves. The mass of leaves fallin every year covered the ground. Then the rains and shade kept the leaves a wet slimy mess most of the year. That is the reason we didn't have any forest fires. There was swampy places all through the woods on account of the leaves holdin the water like a big sponge.

There was a bigness and a certain mouldy or woodsy smell to a forest that's hard to describe, but to us it was mighty sweet and satisfyin.

CHAPTER 2

TO BUILD A CABIN

THE first thing on hand, after movin into a new country like this, was to build a cabin to live in. If you was lucky like we was, to move in with somebody, and you was always welcome in every home, you could take a little more time in buildin a cabin.

Some, who wasn't so lucky, had to make a lean-to out of poles alongside a big log and cover it with leaves. Here they could sort of camp while they was buildin. Most always there was a neighbor or two with their boys willin to help a newcomer. With a good crew of men it wasn't such a big job. Some would go to the woods, fall the trees, and cut the logs into the right lengths. Somebody would bring an ox team and drag up the logs. First thing to do in startin the cabin was to drag up a big rock for each corner to rest on. Then we had a "raisin."

If there was plenty of help, the four best ax men was put one on each corner. They done the notchin to make a neat fit. All hands helped to roll the heavy green logs up in place. Our cabin was eighteen feet wide and twenty feet long, which was about the universal size in our locality. It was made out of hickory elm logs about twelve inches in diameter, because that was the kind of timber that was growin close by. Later on when hewn log houses was built, poplar was the timber most used.

Two side logs was flattened a little on the bottom and placed on the rocks. A saddle was cut on top of these logs, to receive the notch that was cut on the ends of the end logs. Then a saddle was cut on top to receive two more side logs, and so on up until the cabin was about eight logs or eight feet high. When you come to the gables, the end logs was shortened. Long straight logs runnin lengthways of the cabin and spaced about three feet apart was notched in to lay the roof on. The roof

was clapboards, split from straight-grained oak cuts, three or four feet long. A tool called a froe, which was a heavy knife with a handle stickin out at right angle, was used in makin clapboards. The oak cuts was stood on end; then with a mallet the knife was drove down in the end of the block following the grain. With the handle you started to pry and follow the split on down to the bottom of the block. If you didn't know your knittin, you was liable to split out before reachin the bottom and spoil the board.

Clapboards was six or eight inches wide and a half to three-quarters of an inch thick. They was laid in rows across the roof logs, beginnin at the bottom and spaced apart a little. A second row was laid over to cover the spacin cracks. Above them on the roof was another row of clapboards overlapping them below. Then a weight pole was placed on top of each row of boards to hold them on. These poles was notched into the gable logs at either end so they wouldn't slide down. There wasn't a nail used in buildin a cabin.

If you wanted a loft, big poles was run across the top side logs to lay a floor on. There was plenty of open places under the clapboard roof where the snow would blow in sometimes, but that didn't matter much. If you slept in the loft, you pulled your head under the covers durin a storm. When you got up in the mornin, you shake the snow off the covers, grab your shirt and britches, and hop down the ladder to the fireplace, where it was good and warm.

Doors, winders, and fireplace openin was all cut out after the cabin was up. It was easier to do it this way. Savin timber wasn't any item anyhow. Mostly two doors was made, one on each side of the cabin. A winder or two was cut. The floor was made from puncheons. They was boards two or three inches thick, split out of straight-grained oak or ash, and laid on sleeper logs or joists. After the floor was pinned down it was gone over with an adz and smoothed up a little. Even then you sometimes got a splinter in your bare feet. Casin made from

puncheons was pinned to the ends of the logs at door and winder openins to hold them in place.

The door was made from puncheons pinned together and hung on wooden hinges made of a block of wood and a pin. The latch was a big wood bar fastened at one end across the inside of the door. The other end dropped into a slot on the casin. A hole was bored through the door jist above the latch, and a leather thong fastened to the bar could be pushed through this hole. In the days of Indun trouble this thong was pulled inside at night so nobody could get in. Other times it hung outside so you could lift the latch. The old sayin "The latch string is on the outside" meant you was welcome. The winders was jist wooden strips across the openin with greased paper pasted on. This made a right good substitute for glass and let in more light than you would think. The grease kept the rain from softenin up the paper, but it had to be renewed every once in a while.

In one end of the cabin an openin six or eight feet wide and about five feet high was cut out for the fireplace. The hearth was made with wet clay pounded down till it was good and hard. Then a boxlike frame of puncheons was fastened to the ends of the logs to hold the clay walls of the fireplace which was laid up with mud cats. There wasn't any brick or lime, and we couldn't use rocks because they would split all to pieces with the heat. Mud cats was made of a handful of wet clay with a little dry grass mixed in to hold it together. You kept workin it till it got good and tough, then you squared it into a brick about six inches wide. When the back wall and jams was laid up with mud cats to the top of the frame, the chimney was started. It was cribbed up out of oak sticks, two laid one way and two the other, with a layer of soft clay under each stick. As you was goin up with the chimney, you kept reachin down on the inside and the outside with handfuls of soft clay to smear on a good coat.

The heat and the rain would cause the clay to fall out. When that happened you had to tear down the chimney and build it over. Once in a while it would catch fire, and then you had to

run out and grab a pole, jam it back of the chimney and pry till it fell over.

Another job was chinkin and daubin all the cracks between the logs. Chinkin was drivin short split pieces of wood between the logs, wedgin them in by drivin one on top of another, sort of slantwise. Then soft clay was daubed or plastered over the chinkin both inside and out. If you wanted to add a finishin touch you could drag your fingers along the soft clay, leavin a fluted effect.

Some of the first beds was just poles poked in holes bored in the logs and restin on a stake at the outer corner. Poles or puncheons was laid across this frame to support a mattress. Tables and benches was rough, handmade affairs, too. Puncheons were smoothed off for tops, and poles fitted in holes for legs.

Water was a big item in locatin a cabin site. If there wasn't a spring close by, you had to dig a well. We was lucky in the Sugar Flats. You could get a good well most any place by diggin about eighteen or twenty feet down to clear water in a clean gravel bed. Wells was walled up with flat rocks. A box about three feet high, made of puncheons, was built around the top. Back a piece from the curb a forked post was set in the ground. Restin in this fork was a long pole with a rock weight on the outer end. A wild grapevine takin the place of a rope was fastened around the other end over the well. The vine was tied to a wooden bucket. This outfit was called a well sweep. To get a bucket of water, you pulled down on the grapevine until the bucket filled with water, then the stone on the other end of the pole helped bring the bucket up. Once in a while a lizard or toad would jump down in the well, but we jist fished him out and forgot about it. Might not a been the purest water in the world, but a lot of us stayed purty healthy and lived a long time drinkin it.

When your cabin and well was finished, you had a mighty snug and comfortable home. It hadn't cost a cent either. It didn't look very fancy, but it served the purpose right well of housin a big happy family.

CHAPTER 3

CLEARING THE LAND

AFTER the family was moved in the cabin, the next thing on hand was clearin a patch of ground and gettin in a crop of corn. There was no question about meat. The woods was full of game; all you had to do was take the rifle and go out and get it. But the settler's staff of life was corn bread, and to get it you had to overcome old mother nature with the ax and fire and hard work. Seemed like a everlastin job, too.

The first clearin was done in a "hurry-up-and-get-in-a-crop" style. Two or three acres was all that could be cleared the first year, even with some help from a neighbor. These first clearins was called "eighteen inches and under." That is, all trees under eighteen inches in diameter was cut down; them over that size was left standin. This was to save time. All the small trees was cut up and piled around the standin trees. Grubs was dug out with a grubbin hoe, and with the brush was piled on the log heaps. It was quite a trick to pile all that green stuff so it would burn. Limbs had to be trimmed flat and laid straight and close, or they wouldn't burn. Even at that it took a lot of pokin and "rightin up" and smoky eyes and burned faces before you got rid of all this green stuff.

When the firin was done, the standin trees was also killed and stopped drawin life from the ground and shadin the growin corn. A lot of blackened and burned trunks was left standin, but they didn't bother any more than the stumps; we jist plowed around em the first year. A lot of brush was piled around the edge of the clearin to fence out the family cow and the deer so they wouldn't eat up the corn.

That first year's plowin was enough to ruin the disposition of a preacher. With roots a poppin and a crackin and flyin back on your shins, draggin the heavy old plow around them

green stumps, gettin fast under a big root then flyin outa the ground, the clearin was a hairy, scratched-over mess when you was done. It looked more like a bunch of hogs had been rootin there. About all the cultivatin done on that first crop was with the hoe. One good thing: there wasn't any weeds. But the ground would come up full of all the wild flowers and ferns and such that grew in the woods. Sprouts would grow around the green stumps. Kept you hoein all summer. Then the squirrels and the birds jumped in and took a big toll. You was lucky the first year to get enough corn to supply meal for the family until next crop time.

After the first year clearin was done by a system that saved lots of work. We deadened the timber and left it standin a few years until it got dry enough to burn. Deadenin a tree, or "girdlin" as it was called, was cuttin a ring around the tree with an ax. This shut off the sap from goin up to the leaves. Most of the girdlin was done in the summer. Some folks thought that all deadenin had to be done in the dark of the moon durin June, July, and August. I don't know how much the moon had to do with it, but I know that trees girdled certain days durin the summer months would show wilted leaves in an hour or so.

We always had about three deadenins, one, two, and three years old. That gave us a new one each year to make and one ripe one ready to clear and burn. In choppin the dead trees down a good timber man could throw a tree just about where he wanted it to go. With a bunch standin fairly close together we had a way of cuttin them almost off, then fallin the last one in such a way that it would strike the others and all would go down in a heap. It was dangerous work, fallin trees; but you hardly ever heard of a accident.

After the trees was all down there was one great big brush pile. At the first dry spell we started fires wherever one could be started. They would burn for days and get rid of a lot of limbs and brush. The trunks and big limbs wouldn't burn until

they was rolled together. Whenever we could, we cut small logs in two and yanked them around crossways of a big log and started a fire where they crossed. This was called "niggerin them off." The smaller top log was the nigger. If you could burn both logs in two, you saved a lot of choppin later. We wasn't concerned about the destruction then. What we wanted was corn fields. We had started raisin hogs, and they had to have corn, too. There was no market at all for timber.

Everything was now ready for the big day of the log rollin. Sometimes I think those rollins was more for a general neighborhood get-together of talkin, banterin, eatin, and maybe a little whisky drinkin throwed in, than it was for jist rollin logs. Folks was notified of the day by puttin a boy on a horse and sendin him around the neighborhood.

Bright and early on the day set here they come. Forty or fifty men and women folks and children. About as stout and jolly and rip-roarin a set of men as you would want to see. The women folks, of course, went to the cabin to prepare the dinner and gossip. The children played around. Each man was supposed to bring a handspike, which was a tough, seasoned saplin about six feet long and three inches through, tapered some at each end.

Generally, two or three companies was organized, dependin on the number of men. Each company chose a captain and was assigned an ox team with a driver, a chain man, and two or three handspike men. The balance of the men was divided into handspike squads of ten or twelve men. The ox-team gangs tackled all the big logs. Their job was to pull them out of their beds in the ground and start the heaps by rollin them together. Handspike squads carried any log they could lift on them spikes. When they reached the heap, the men on one side would let down their spikes and step out of the way; the men on the other side simply lifted and tilted the log over in place.

Each company would try to outdo the other. Handspike squads would boast that they could pile more logs and outlift other squads. The biggest boast of all—and it could be looked

for before the day was over—came when someone let out the challenge that he could pull down any man who wanted to get on the other end of his handspike. He most always got a taker.

I was helpin at a rollin one time when the greatest show of pullin down come off, I believe I ever saw. We had a right good start that mornin when two men showed up a little late, a man and his son. Both was big chaps and both was known for their mighty strength on a handspike. They sauntered over to our squad, spoke and joked a little while we rested on our handspikes. Then right out of a clear sky the older man said:

“Let me on the end of one of them handspikes. I can pull down any man on the other end.”

There was a young man on our squad, not over big, but well built and all muscle and gristle, who grinned and said to his partner:

“Get off and let him have the other end of this spike.”

Well, we was surprised and afraid our young feller had bargained for more than he could handle. We never said nothin though; just walked over to a good-sized log, laid our handspikes down and rolled it on, and lifted it up. Jerry, the challenger, and our man was up front. Then the boss said:

“All right, boys, let em have it!”

We let down on our handspikes and give em the load. Well, Jerry grunted and puffed and turned red in the face, and done his best. Our man jist held on as if he was made of iron and had no give in him. After a bit you could see Jerry’s shoulders begin to round. Then his handspike started to go down. He hung on as long as he could, when all at once down he went on his knees. We caught the log, but Jerry had to be helped up.

We hadn’t any more than got Jerry on his feet when his boy, a chap as big or bigger than his father, steps up in kind of a huff and says:

“If you’re able, I’ll take you on.”

Well sir, our young feller just straightened up, swung his arms some to get the stretch out of em, looked at Jerry’s son kind a fightin like, then spit on his hands and said:

"Git on!"

We brought the same log up again and at a word from the boss let em have it. You never saw such liftin. Looked like their backs and legs just swayed not knowin which way to go. We thought this time our champion had met his match, but we noticed Jerry's son's shoulders begin to hump a little. Then a sickly look come into his face and down he went jist like his Pap. That made our man champion of the day. All this liftin was done in a good-natured way. Jerry and his son admitted they was beat. Both men was down in the back so bad they had to go home.

A custom of the day, and one we always expected at a log rollin, was the water boy with a bucket of water in one hand and a jug of whisky in the other. Some three or four times in a half day he made his rounds. Everybody tipped up the jug and took a snort of whisky and followed it with a gourd of cool water. We thought a snort of whisky now and then braced us up some and put a little more lift in us. Anyhow it braced us up. Nobody thought anything about it. Nobody took too much while workin; if he did he was considered a hog.

A big dinner went along with a rollin. In the afternoon as the day of the rollin drew to a close, some one who was good at mixin drinks was sent to the house to mix a bucket of eggnog for the jollification that wound up the day. When the blackened and tired men gathered at the cabin waitin for supper, they drank eggnog, and hard as they had worked wasn't too tired to banter each other to wrestle, throw the maul, hop, or even run races. After a hearty meal they all went home happy as larks and ready for another day.

The clearin wasn't ready for the plow until all small chunks and pieces was picked up, and what grubs was left was dug out and piled on the log heaps. No fires was started when work of any kind was goin on, of course; the smoke would run you out in short time. The heaps had to dry out a few days and then the fires was lighted.

It was a purty sight to see all them big piles of logs a burnin,

especially at night. Such a poppin and a crackin and a shootin of flame and sparks high in the air! The big fires would throw out so much light it would turn darkness into daylight. The heat and smoke would be so bad you couldn't go near for a day or so. When the fires did die down enough, we went in with our handspikes and righted the heaps by pryin and pushin the logs up together so they would keep burnin. Log heaps would burn and smoulder for several days. In fact, there was nearly always a burnin or smoulderin log heap around a settler's cabin when he was clearin land. It was a good place to get live coals if the fire went out in the fireplace.

When the last log heap burned out, the clearin was ready for the plow. Of course, there was plenty of stumps left; they had to stay there until they rotted out. There was no dynamite then to blow them out, and it would have been an endless and back-breakin job to dig them out. Some would burn out when the ground got real dry and the stump was doty with age. We had to plow around them as long as they was there.

After gettin a start in a new country, most settlers managed to have a yoke of oxen and a horse or two for work animals. The horses was mostly for ridin. Pap had his ridin horse and mother had a gentle one she rode. That was about the only way of gettin around on account of there bein no roads, just trails through the woods. When we went to mill we had to ride. When mother went visitin, she rode a horse. She would bring old Nell up longside a stump, hop up on the stump and mount, then have one of the bigger children get up and hand up the smallest one in front, then two of us bigger children mounted behind mother. She would go trottin down the trail to the Collins or the McDonald cabins, holdin one child in front and two of us hangin on behind, and think nothin dif-f'rent than if it was a buggy ride.

Oxen was the main work animal. They was mighty good for plowin a new wild piece of land. They was slow, but they could stand the heavy work better'n horses. They wasn't so fretful in a new ground full of stumps and roots. They moved

slow and careful, keepin about the same gait all day long, which made it easy on the plow and the plowman. They could be turned out to look for their food and would browse on what a horse would go hungry on.

Oxen was less trouble to hitch up than horses. The only gear you had to bother with was a yoke and a log chain. You carried the yoke up to the off ox, that's the one that worked on the right-hand side, drew the bow out of the yoke, lay one end of the yoke across his neck, slip the bow up in place, hold it with your knee, and slip the key in place on top. The near ox, the one that works on the left-hand side, wouldn't be far away. Call him—"Buck, Bright or Berry," whatever his name might be, "Come on under here." Draw the bow, hold the end of the yoke up, and no matter from what direction he came, he would walk right up and put his neck under the yoke. You didn't have to worry about them gettin scared and runnin off by any noise or loud talk while yokin them up. They would stand there with their eyes half shut and chew their cud, like they didn't care what you was doin. After you hooked the big log chain in the ring underneath the yoke, you was ready to go.

You don't use any lines drivin oxen. Just a short-stocked whip with a long lash. If you wanted them to turn to the right, holler "Gee!" keen and crack the whip over to the left of their heads. For turnin left, holler "Haw!" and do the same. They minded well, even better'n horses. A good yoke of oxen was worth about the same as a good horse—forty to fifty dollars.

For haulin, most every settler had a big, strong, heavy-made two-wheeled cart. You could go places with an ox cart you couldn't get through with horses, such as through woods and brush. Oxen would just bat their eyes and keep on goin, payin no attention to the brush and limbs whackin them on the back. Horses wouldn't stand for that.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIREPLACE

BUILDIN a fire in a fireplace so it would throw out heat wasn't a matter of jist throwin in a armful of wood haphazard-like. There was only one way, and that was the right way.

First, you rolled in the back logs: as big a one for the bottom log as the fireplace would take, then a smaller one on top. For these logs we used green or partly seasoned timber so it would burn slow and last longer. Buckeye made good back logs. These backlogs not only protected the clay back wall of the fireplace but they would throw out lots of heat when the front fire became a mass of live coals. Green backlogs would last for several days.

The andirons, or dog irons as we called them, was then shoved up against the back logs. Then a good-sized piece called the forestick was laid across the front of them. Between the logs the fire was made. The forestick kept burnin pieces of wood from rollin out on the hearth and also let a draft under the fire.

Most fireplaces was right good sized so they would take big sticks of wood. One of our neighbors had one so big it almost took up all the end of the room. When he put on a new backlog, he drug it through the house with a horse that went in a door on one side and out a door on the opposite side. Then the log was rolled into the fireplace by hand.

At night you could keep a fire by bankin it down with ashes. In the mornin pull off the ashes and there was a good bed of coals to start a new fire. We had no matches them days, and it was a lot of trouble to start a fire with flint and steel, so we aimed to keep some log heaps burnin in the clearin most of the time for a place to get coals if the fire went out in the fireplace. If all fires was out at home, a boy was sent to a neighbor to borrow a shovelful of coals.

The fireplace was right handy when the women wanted to sweep the room. They would begin at the back of the room and sweep toward the hearth. All the dirt would be in the fire in short order. Though we had candles, a good blazin fire of an evenin would make enough light to work and read by. Fireplaces had the reputation of burnin your face and freezin your back, but there was nothin to hinder a person from turnin around if he was a mind to.

We lived mighty happy and contented in the early days. With a good snug cabin, a big fireplace, and a supply of corn meal on hand, there wasn't much to worry about. Our big family spent many a pleasant winter evenin settin around a blazin fire while the wind and the snow cut capers outside.

Pap would be settin in his usual place to one side of the fire, chewin terbacker, and spittin in the fire. He wasn't much to talk then. Sometimes he would set there by the hour and never say a word to anybody; just chew and look into the fire. I often wondered afterward what he was thinkin about, if he wasn't sometimes tryin to imagine what this part of the country would look like in the future. Pap was luckier than some of the older ones. He could read. If he could get hold of a newspaper, no matter if it was back date, he would read evenins. He had an old history of the world that he had read so much the pages was wore through where his thumb rested.

Us boys would pass the evenin cipherin on our slates, parchin corn, whittlin out something with our knives, or if you was big enough to handle a rifle, mouldin bullets. We could do most anything, jist so we didn't make any noise. That Pap wouldn't have. If any started, he just tapped his foot on the floor about three times. That was enough; we understood mighty well what it meant.

Mother and the girls would spin and knit. They was kept purty busy makin clothes for the family. Most everybody went to bed early and got up early them days. There wasn't much chance of wearin out your sociability of evenins.

Occasionally a neighbor and some of his family would

drop in to set by the fire and chat a while. If there was any grown girls in the family and the visitors was men folks, it wasn't uncommon about bed time to hear the father say:

"Boys, step outside while the gals go to bed."

When you went back in the cabin, every girl was under the covers, head and all. And you didn't look too close at them, either.

Fireplaces not only furnished heat for the cabin, but there was where all the cookin was done.

Swingin from one of the jams was a crane fitted with three hooks of different length so a pot could be hung high or low over the coals for different heat. The crane could be swung out or in from the fire when puttin on or takin off a pot.

A iron pot or two, a skillet, or spider as we called it if it had legs, a griddle, and a squatty-lookin pot known as a Dutch oven about summed up the cookin tools needed for fireplace cookin. Hangin on the jam was a long-handled fire shovel and a pot hook for reachin in and takin off lids, so you wouldn't burn your hands.

When mother started a meal, everybody had to scatter back from the fireplace out of her way. She was a little woman, and it was a wonder how she could pick up them big heavy spiders with one hand and carry them around with such ease. And how she could handle the fire shovel—puttin just the right amount of coals around a pot to give the proper heat. And she never dropped the lids she lifted with the pot hook. Sometimes a few coals or a little ashes would get in the cookin, but that didn't matter; we thought it just helped season it some. While it wasn't a very handy place for the women to work, it was surprisin what a good meal could be scared up on a fireplace and with so few things to do it with. Their faces and hands got purty brown cookin before an open fire, but nobody thought anything of it for they all done the same work and all looked alike. If they had been any other color, we'd a thought they was either sick or aristocrats.

We wouldn't a lasted long without corn meal. Corn bread

was our staff of life. For several years we had it in some form for breakfast, dinner and supper, never tirin of it. Corn bread was made in several different ways. As I remember, there was corn dodger, which was corn meal mixed with water, salt, and butter and baked in a spider. Johnny cake was mixed the same way, but baked on a clapboard tilted up before the fire. Turnin a Johnny cake wasn't so easy to do. Mother would take hold of one end of the clapboard, give it a little shake to loosen the cake, then flip it up in the air to turn it over and catch it on the board. Then it was set before the fire again to finish bakin.

Hoe cake was mixed about the same as Johnny cake, flattened out with the hands, and put on a griddle to bake.

Corn pone was scalded meal mixed and put in a warm place to raise. Then it was mixed with punkin and let raise again. It was baked in the Dutch oven. Corn meal mush was a big favorite in the early days. Mush and milk was a common meal at supper time, and fried mush for breakfast. Many a time us children went to bed on a supper of mush and milk and not a thing else. Some people wouldn't think they could get along on corn bread every meal, but we did for years and grew up a right strong and husky bunch.

Lye hominy was another corn dish. It was corn grains soaked in lye made from wood ashes, biled until the hulls come loose and was rubbed off by hand, soaked in cold water until the lye was all out, then cooked.

We didn't have to worry much about meat. Some settlers brought hogs in when they took up land. They was turned loose in the woods to feed on mast and herbs they rooted out of the ground. Mast is acorns, beechnuts, chestnuts, and other nuts. The lard was so strong that mother used butter instead for cookin. The meat was strong, too, and there was plenty of wild game we liked better. At first, deer was plentiful and it was on the table so often we got tired of it. After I got big enough to handle a rifle, mother would often say to me:

"Son, I wish you would run down in the bottoms and get me a turkey for a change."

I wouldn't be gone more than a hour before I'd be back with a gobbler for her.

The woods was full of squirrels. You could go out most any time and get a mess. We used only the hind parts and the backs of em. There was also lots of grouse—pheasants, we called em—which we thought about the most tasty meat of all. Once in a while someone would kill a bear and divide it around among the neighbors; but that meat was sort of strong and oily. Fall Crick and White River was full of fish, like suckers, red-horse, cat fish, bass, perch, salmon,¹ buffalo, and red eye. We didn't bother much with a hook and line. Pap always kept a good canoe. If we wanted a mess of fish, all we had to do was grab the gig, jump in the canoe, pole up and down the crick a few times; if the water was clear, you was purty sure to spear a mess.

Every family had some chickens. They took care of themselves, feedin in the woods and roostin in the trees. They was kept jist for the eggs. We considered wild turkey and pheasant much better to eat. The family cow furnished the main beverage as well as butter and cottage cheese for the family. Once in a while she was the start of a mighty good ox.

For emergencies mother would jerk venison and turkey breasts. The meat was sliced thin and hung over a bed of coals to half dry and half cook. Then it was hung in a cool place for future use.

It was a universal custom for the women to tend the garden, just as they always milked the cow. We had garden stuff of most all kinds. Potatoes and punkins was the most important. Tomatoes, called to-mat-us-es, was raised only for ornaments to set on the mantle; they was supposed to be poison then, so we never eat em. Punkins was used in several ways. They was stewed, put on plates, buttered and eat. Sometimes

¹ Wall-eyed pike were sometimes called salmon, or jack salmon, in Indiana by the early settlers.

mother fried punkin. It was stewed, spread on clapboards and dried before the fire for winter use. We also made punkin molasses. The punkin was allowed to freeze, then the juice was squeezed out and boiled down. While mother was dryin the punkin I would beg a little of her, run it through the cullender, dry it before the fire, cut it into small strips and roll it into tight rolls. This was called punkin leather. It was mighty handy to slip in your pocket and nibble on at school.

One other important part of every garden was the two or three rows of terbacker to furnish the smokin for the old women and the chewin for the men folks. About all the men and the bigger boys chewed terbacker.

Pap always made a good supply of maple sugar. The trees was tapped the same as the Indians did it, the sap ran out in handmade troughs dug out of the short cuts of logs, and it was boiled down in a big kettle until it grained into sugar. Pap would never waste any sugar water to make molasses. What he was lookin after was the sugar supply, as the maple sugar was the only kind of sweet'nin we had.

There was plenty of wild grapes, wild plums, and wild gooseberries in the woods. They was made into sass. But no pies, for there was no flour to make the crust. Wheat wasn't raised for several years. The ground was so new and rich it would grow up all straw and fall over by cuttin time without makin any grain. Besides that, the first grist mills had no way to bolt the flour. Then agin, I think the older people liked their three-times-a-day corn bread so well that they didn't want anything that would take its place. I remember when mother started makin wheat bread; Pap fussed around about it and said he would jist as soon skin a hackberry tree and eat the bark. Our first white bread was salt risin, for there was no yeast then to make any other kind. For biscuits, we made a substitute for baking powder by burnin corn cobs and usin the ashes.

Mother soon found that if she was goin to do much bakin for our big family she would have to get a bigger oven and one

with more heat. So Pap went out back of the cabin and made her one. He first built up a platform out of puncheons, about eighteen inches high and four feet square. On this platform he made a holler cone out of clay. On one side was a door. Opposite the door and a little higher up was a hole for draught and smoke. The oven was heated by buildin a fire inside of good dry wood. When mother thought it was hot enough, she would rake out the fire and brush out the ashes as best she could. Then she would test the heat by throwin in a finger or two of flour. If the flour browned to suit her, she put in the bread and closed the door. The heat in the clay walls done the rest.

We didn't use store tea and coffee. It was hard to get, but the main reason was that everlastin shortage of money to buy with. Sometimes mother made tea from spicewood and sassafras. A right good substitute for coffee was made from parched corn.

Our table was mighty simple and plain, consistin of pewter plates, tin cups, iron spoons, knives and forks. The forks had but two prongs. From long usage some of the forks had a prong missin. Yet we got along purty well them days. We had our ups and downs, but nobody went hungry and nobody done much complainin. We just about lived off the land and was satisfied.

CHAPTER 5

THE SPINNING WHEEL

WHEN I was a youngster, all our clothin was linen. We didn't have any sheep for several years on account of the wolves. Besides, the woods was so full of burrs, briers, and brush that the wool would a been ruined. A few of the older folks wore buckskin britches and huntin shirts, but Pap and mother saw that our family had linen clothes.

Most families put out a half acre or so of flax every spring so they could make their own linen. Flax grew somethin like wheat or grass. In the late summer when it was ripe it was pulled up by the roots and spread on the ground to dry. Then it was bound in bundles and stored away until fall, when it was again spread out on the ground to let the fall rains rot the inside or heart of the stalk. The outside fiber would remain firm. After the rottin process, it was again bound up and laid away until brittle cold weather, when it was run through a hand breaker. Then it was scutched or swingled by graspin a bundle in one hand and layin it across a solid board. With a wooden knife in the other hand it was whipped and beaten until all the dry heart of the stalk fell out leavin only the outside fiber.

The fiber was then drawn through a hackle, which was a board with a lot of sharp spikes stickin up, until all the seed and root ends was jerked off. Drawn through a finer hackle, the fiber split up into fine silky strands. The bunch of them was wound around a distaff and the flax was ready for spinnin.

To spin, one end of the distaff was stuck in a hole in the frame of the spinnin wheel. The spinner then started the wheel with her foot and with one hand started the flax by pullin a little from the distaff. With the other hand she fed it on to the reel. The thread was gauged as it passed through the fingers. If it felt too big it was jerked back to draw out the fiber thinner.

If too small it was given a quick jerk from the distaff to feed on more. As the thread passed over the spinnin wheel it was twisted and wound on to a large spool. If a thread broke, the wheel was stopped, the two ends frayed out with the thumb and finger then pressed together, the wheel was started, and you couldn't tell where the break was.

The thread was reeled off in skeins and biled in lye to bleach and soften. It was now ready for the weaver. We didn't have a loom. Pap thought mother had enough to do takin care of a big family. So our weavin was done by a neighbor woman who made a business of takin in weavin. The linen cloth was made into dresses for the women and girls, and shirts and britches for the men and boys. Underwear was somethin the men and boys didn't have for several years, or until we started raisin sheep. We wore linen summer and winter. If you got too cold, you put on two shirts and two pair of britches—that is, if you had em.

All bed clothes, towels, table cloths, and women's stockings was linen. Mother spun her own thread for sewin. If we wanted a fish line, mother spun that, too.

Soon as we got to raisin sheep we had lots warmer clothin for winter. After shearin the sheep, which was done by the women, about an inch of wool was cut off to get rid of the burrs, and the rest was washed in soapsuds. When dry it was picked by hand into small loose and fluffy bunches. Then it was carded, or drawn through small sharp spikes much like the flax hackle, until the fine hairs was all pulled out straight. Then it was made into rolls and spun into thread same as flax was, only the spinnin wheel was bigger than the flax wheel. Mother had three small wheels and two large ones so the girls could help spin. When enough thread was spun, it was taken to the weaver and made into cloth. Sometimes mother colored the thread; then we had plaid goods.

Mother made us boys an everyday coat or jacket called a wamus. It buttoned in front like any other coat, but had a long, divided skirt, or tail, in the back. When we got cold we

would bring the tail around and tie it in front. That also kept the tail out of the way when workin.

Instead of neckties, men wore a stock if they wanted to look dressy. It was a big silk or satin affair, sometimes pleated, that covered the chest and run over the shoulders and buttoned in the back. It extended up until it almost touched the ears. Pap had one but laid it aside; said it was too dressy for him. When I was about grown I picked it up and wore it out.

Men's hats was made in the hat shops in the towns. The prevailin hat for dress was the tall, bell-crown style. Some of them was a sight to see; they was so big and tall and hairy. For a dozen or more coon hides, a hatter would make you a hat out of half of them, keepin the other half for his pay. He sheared the hair off the hides and mixed it with a sticky preparation of some kind, beat it into a stiff mess and spread it over a form or hat block. More hair was spread on to make the nap. When they was smoothed up they looked purty slick, but when they got rained on they fuzzed up like an old mad coon for sure. Pap never would wear one; said it made him feel stuck up. He always wore a plain, broad-brim wool hat. Boys wore that kind, too. Some coonskin caps was worn, but not many with the tail left on. They was worn only by men like Uncle Milt and others who hunted a lot and wanted to hang on to the Indun fightin days. In the summer time, boys went bareheaded mostly. If we wanted a straw hat, we braided long strips of wheat straws and got mother to sew them together, workin in the shape as she sewed. The first headwear for women was ordinary sunbonnets. Soon as dress goods was wagoned up from river towns they made bonnets about all shapes and colors imagined. Big red bandana handkerchiefs was also worn on the head by women.

Pap made all the shoes for our big family. He would work on shoes only of evenins. They was for winter wear. In the summer most everybody went barefoot, especially the women and children. Some wore moccasins made from ground hog hides. In the fall Pap would go to town and buy or trade for

a half side of sole leather and a half side of upper leather. Mother's and his shoes was always made first, then shoes for the girls. Us boys come last. Sometimes he didn't get to us bigger boys until purty late in the fall. I guess he thought it made us tough and healthy to go barefoot in the frost. As I was the oldest boy, it would be up toward Christmas before I got any shoes.

Sometimes us older boys would go to school half a term barefooted. On frosty mornins in the fall we would heat a clapboard before the fireplace until it was almost charred, stick it under our arm and run through the frost until our feet began to sting. Then we threw the clapboard on the ground, stood on it until our feet warmed, grab it up and make another run. This way we would reach the schoolhouse in purty good shape, not sufferin much from the cold or thinkin much about it.

I remember goin over to Uncle Ben's one time to play with my cousins. (He was mother's brother.) We'd had a cold spell and the crick was froze over. I walked across the ice in my bare feet. Another time I remember when Pap finished my shoes on Christmas eve. I was so tickled with em I put em on, run out of the door and tore around the house to try em out. I forgot about the ice that had formed around the well and the water trough. When I hit that slick spot with them new shoes, I got a fall I never did forget.

Grown girls would want to fix up a little when they went to meetin on Sunday. They would carry their shoes and stockins in their hands until they come in sight of the meetin house, then slip em on. After meetin was over they wouldn't be more than out of sight when they'd take em off. They was mighty proud of their shoes, but they was so used to goin barefoot their shoes felt a mighty sight more comfortable carried in the hand.

CHAPTER 6

ILLS AND ACHES

BECAUSE of the newness of the country, the way we lived, and the plain food we eat, sickness in the early days was somewhat diff'rent from times later on. There was few doctors then, and they didn't know too much about what was the matter with us when we got sick. Besides, they didn't have the proper medicines or tools to doctor what they did know about. In many cases, if a person didn't have the body or the backbone to whip a sickness, he just didn't pull through. People died and nobody knew what was the matter with em.

There was a lot of home doctorin and a lot of granny remedies used. Some might have done some good, but a lot of em didn't amount to much. The most common complaint, and the one dreaded the most, was malaria. Agur, or chills and fever, we called it. Most everyone had a spell of it in the fall. It was so common that country people actually shaped up their work in the late summer before they got down with the chills. If agur couldn't be broke in its early stages, it would last for several months. Most times it run its course anyhow. The only cause we could lay it to was the dense damp woods and the rotten logs and leaves.

There was about four kinds of agur; at least that was the way we had it divided up. The most severe attacks was called "the shakin agur." About the same time every day you had a chill that lasted two hours. Heat, blankets, or nothin else would make you warm or stop you from shakin. After the chill come the fever, which stayed with you the rest of the day.

Another form of agur come on with a lighter chill: sort of a coldness of the body and not much shakin. It was followed by fever.

A still lighter form was the every-other-day agur. The

chill and fever would be on one day, and the next you'd feel purty good. In some cases the chill wouldn't hit for three days, after you thought maybe you was pullin out of it.

Light cases of agur was called "the slows." You went around feelin draggy and no account. Most all attacks of agur finished up with the slows. You'd feel so weak it was an effort to walk.

In severe cases, and after agur run too long, a hard place would form in the side called "agur cake." That was a sign you was purty bad off. Doctors wasn't called much for agur. Home remedies was used. One was a tea made from a herb called boneset, followed by a tonic made from poplar, wild cherry, dogwood, or prickly ash bark mixed with whisky. Another remedy was ginseng roots and whisky. About the hardest to take was made by firin a rifle until the barrel was black from burnt powder, then fillin it with water to stand overnight. You drank the powder water. But, as the Indun said, "No hurt, no cure."

A good cathartic for grownups was made by bilin down the sap from white walnut trees. For flux and other bowel diseases, alum root biled in milk was used.

Children's complaints was doctored with teas made from spicewood, sassafras bark, or peppermint leaves. When apothecary shops come to Indianapolis, the medicines they handled was called botanical remedies because they was made of herbs same as our home remedies, only they was more effective. Calomel was one of these store remedies used a lot by the first doctors. There was a Dr. Stipp² who prescribed calomel as soon as he had a look at you, no matter what the ailment was. It was such a sure thing that when he called, people called it a round of "Stipp an calomel." Another store remedy was called "No. 6." Another was "Thunder an Lightnin," biled down, and it sure was. Bayberry bark was also used in medicines. Then came Sappington's Pills, which became a universal remedy for agur.

² Dr. George W. Stipp was a practicing physician in Indianapolis in the 1830's.

Most all doctors believed in bleedin them days. First thing they done was have you roll up your sleeve, grab a broom handle to extend the veins, then they would proceed with the operation.

Accidents, like cuts and broken bones, was usually took care of at home. I remember when one of my younger brothers fell and broke his arm. Pap carried him to the house, examined his arm, then whittled out some thin poplar splints and bound them on his arm. It wasn't long till his arm was good as ever. Another time I slashed my shin with an adz, makin a nasty-lookin cut. After a few days my leg started to swell right smart. Mother said it didn't look very good. A traveler come along and stopped at our house. He said he could heal my leg if we would bring him a basket of beech leaves. He put the leaves in a pot and biled em for an hour or so. Then he put em around my leg as a poultice. In a day or so the swellin went down and my leg started to heal and got all right. Might be my leg was ready to heal anyhow. But people had a lot a faith in their remedies, and I reckon that helped some, too.

We didn't know much about dentists then. If you had a toothache, you either grinned it out or hunted up a doctor and had it pulled. If there was no doctor handy, and it ached so bad you couldn't stand it, you could go to a blacksmith and get him to knock it out by settin a punch agin it. Then with a quick lick of the hammer you got rid of the ache and the tooth too. That didn't hurt any more than a doctor cuttin the gum loose, then pryin around with a big pair of pinchers that slipped off several times.

People got old lookin purty early in life them days. No doubt chills and fever was one cause. Raisin big families brought the women down right fast. The men generally out-lived their wives. The exposure and hardship of frontier life, along with the lack of knowin what to do for sicknesses, no doubt shortened many a life.

CHAPTER 7

THE THREE R's

EARLY schools wasn't much. If a neighborhood wanted a school they got together and started one. I reckon I was about seven years old (1828), and my sister Louisa, who was the oldest of us children, was about nine when Pap and some of the neighbors got together and decided to build a school-house and start some learnin for their youngsters.

There was no danger from Induns any more. They had left except for now and then some friendly ones travelin or comin to trade. The neighbors held a meetin and elected three men to be trustees. Pap was one of them. The trustees was to build a schoolhouse, hire a teacher and provide for his board. All questions comin up between the master and the patrons was to be settled by the trustees.

Pap offered a location for a school on the north part of our place which was about centrally located for most families, although some of the children would have a long walk through the woods.³ The men and the big boys of the neighborhood got together and in a few days built a log house without a cent of outlay from anybody. The room was about twenty feet square, plenty big enough to take care of the twenty or thirty boys and girls who would be comin. On one side of the buildin was a door. Opposite it was the master's chair and table, both handmade. In one end was a big fireplace. In the other end was a rough board shelf put on wood pins that stuck out from the logs. This was the writin table. For light a log was taken out just above the writin table and wood strips pinned up and down across this openin. Greased paper was fastened between these strips. When you went to the writin table you had to climb over the top of the benches so as to set facin the table.

³ The location was on the north side of the present State Fairgrounds, where farm machinery is now exhibited.

The benches was made from slabs split from logs. Legs was put in the flat side, leaving the round side up for us to sit on with our short legs. One leg was put in the middle of the bench to keep the boys from teeterin. Them benches got purty tiresome after settin a long time. They also got purty slick on top from our slidin around on them. If you wanted to rest your back you could sort of hunker down with your elbows on your knees and slide back a little to get your feet off the floor. Once in a while a scholar would slide back too far, lose his balance, and flop he would go on his back on the hard puncheon floor. We had no desks. Your two books and your slate was kept on the floor under your bench. No one had any certain place to set. On cold days the big boys and girls would give the benches nearest the fire to the little ones.

Teachers, or schoolmasters as we called them, was somewhat of a problem to get. Nearly all of them was single men. They wasn't lookin for land or a permanent location, like men with families. They was more of a rovin class. Some was right well educated and turned out to be mighty good fellers. Sometimes we got a master who wasn't as bright as some of the big scholars. It appeared like they had failed at everything else and then took up teachin. There was no such thing then as a woman teacher. It wasn't a woman's job, any more than milkin a cow was a man's job. Then agin it took purty much of a man to handle the big boys and girls.

The only way we got any schoolmaster was to wait until one come along lookin for a place. If the trustees took a notion to him, which they generally did, they told him to draw up his article and go around in the neighborhood and see what signers he could get. If he got enough signers to satisfy him he was hired. The article usually offered a term of three months, December, January, and February, and he got his board and pay. The charge for a full term was fifty to seventy cents a scholar. Some families would sign up for only half a term for big boys, because they had to help at home cuttin wood, goin to mill, and such. Some little folks lived so far away that they

was signed up for half a term, as they could go through the woods only during good weather.

Durin the term the master boarded around different places. A big family, with several children in school, boarded and roomed the master longer than a small family.

After our first log school was built and we was lookin forward to our first school, no master come along. There was a young man in our neighborhood who said he could teach the school. He wasn't the best feller in the world and he didn't get many signers, but the trustees was so anxious to get the school goin that they hired him anyway. He taught about two weeks when the new buildin caught fire at night and burned to the ground. It caused quite a flurry in the neighborhood. Some said the master was careless. Anyway, that ended my first school term.

The next fall rolled around and no new schoolhouse was built. Some wanted a school while others was unconcerned whether their youngsters got any learnin or not. Finally a man named Hawkins, who lived about a mile and a half northwest of us, said he would have a school at his cabin if people wanted it.⁴ He was gettin up in years, but had taught some in his younger days. He lived in a double cabin with jist his wife at home; that give him room to hold school in his kitchen or livin room. The trustees told him to go ahead and sign up what scholars he could. Even though it was a long trip through the dense woods for Louisa and me, Pap signed for us.

Master Hawkins was a big fat man, jolly and good natured. He wasn't very strict, and we done about as we pleased. I reckon we learned a little at that. If the weather was bad at noon we set around where we pleased to eat our dinner, while Mrs. Hawkins went ahead and got their dinner as if we wasn't there. Anything like a nice day and us scholars got outside to

⁴ The Hawkins cabin stood within a few feet of the southeast corner of School 70, Central Avenue and 46th Street. For years a depression in the ground on the north side of the road indicated the location of the old well.

eat. I don't think there was more than twelve or fifteen of us going to that school.

Somethin funny happened at that school along toward the end of the term when the sun was warmin things up. Master Hawkins had a habit of settin in the doorway durin the noon hour when the sun shined down nice and warm and takin a nap. Us scholars was playin around out in front of the cabin, when someone noticed a frog hoppin along purty close to the master. We soon saw the cause of its hurry when a garter snake come crawlin from under a puncheon that laid out in front. The master always wore buckskin britches that stood out at the bottom like a sailor's trousers. Well, the frog spied the master's legs a stickin out there on the ground and them big open britches which I reckon he took for a holler log. In he went for a good place to hide. That cold frog on the master's bare leg was mighty awakenin, for he grabbed his britches leg with both hands and danced around like a wild man. We tried to tell him what it was, but he couldn't hear anything. Mrs. Hawkins come runnin out when she heard the racket and got him in the house. He was kinda got when he shed his britches and found a frog squeezed to death. We all had a good laugh at the master, and he took it in good humor, but we noticed he didn't take any more naps in a open door.

The winter that sister Louisa and me went to the Hawkins school we traveled all the way through the thick woods. There wasn't any road, so Pap blazed a trail for us. We didn't have any trouble goin or comin until long about the last of the winter. One mornin it was snowin; one of them heavy wet snows that sticks to the trees and everything else it falls on. Mother was uneasy about sendin us, but Pap thought we would get along all right. Things was purty white when we started out, but we trudged along for quite a piece before we noticed that the trail and the blazed places was gettin harder to see all the time. That was when we wandered off the trail. We wasn't much excited about it, as we knew a young man who lived about straight east from the schoolhouse and by that time would have

reached school. So we decided to head straight north and pick up his trail in the snow, which we did, or thought so.

The snow was fallin harder all the time and his tracks didn't show very plain, but we figured we could get to school before they was covered up. After follerin them a while we come to a big tree top and a lot of bushes all covered with snow. The tracks sheared off and went around them and didn't straighten out but kept on windin and twistin around. At first we thought the young man must be lost. Then we thought the tracks might be that of a bear. We both started to cry, knowin we was lost. But both bein purty hardy youngsters and knowin quite a little about the way of the woods, we soon braced up and decided to foller them tracks, since they would take us some place. We kept on windin around through the woods for quite a while. Finally we come out into a clearin and there right before our eyes was a cabin.

We was so tickled we couldn't hold ourselves. We was so turned around and upset we was sure we never saw that cabin before in our lives. We ran up to the door and knocked and who should open it but Aunt Polly, Uncle Milt's wife, our nearest neighbor. She took us in and petted us up some and sent us home. We found that the tracks we had been follerin was made by Aunt Polly's cow as she browsed around the woods on her way home.

Pap and mother was some excited about our story, and tickled too. Pap wanted to know why we didn't take time to eat our dinner, as it was after noon when we reached home. We hadn't thought about eatin anything; we had just clung to our dinner buckets all the way. We learned afterward that when the young man whose tracks we was follerin had come to that big tree top, he walked straight through under the snow on almost dry ground. Aunt Polly's cow went around the bushes, and we got switched off.

There was a new turn in school matters the year after we went to the Hawkins school. The next spring some families

from Pennsylvania and Maryland settled on land over to the east of us. They was right thrifty people. They couldn't think of a country without schools for their children, so they started in right away on buildin a schoolhouse for school that fall. They got together with Pap and Uncle Ben and others on our side of the crick, and this time the school was located on Uncle Ben's land across Fall Crick.⁵

School started off that winter with a new master, who was a stranger to our parts, and a goodly number of scholars. It was the first organized school, if it could be called such, that was held in our neighborhood. Readin, writin, 'rithmetic, and spellin covered the full course of studies. A Webster's spellin book served for both readin and spellin; half the page was spellin words and the other half was readin lesson. A Pike's 'rithmetic, a slate and a slate pencil finished the equipment of a scholar. On the writin table was foolscap paper, quill pens and ink. We made our own pens and ink. Black ink was made by bilin down the bark from a soft maple tree. Red ink was made from pokeberries.

School took up about six o'clock in the mornin. People believed in gettin a full day out of a master when they hired him. School would open by the master callin:

"Come to books!"

Then we all started a rush and a scramble for our seats. It didn't make any difference how much noise you made, just so you set down some place. The first lesson in the mornin was 'rithmetic. We just worked our problems to get the right answer. Scholars would be strung out through the book accordin to how bright they was, no two of them on the same lesson. Some would get purty well through the book, while others never got very far. Sometimes one of the older scholars could solve a problem the master couldn't.

About the middle of the forenoon and agin in the afternoon the master would say:

⁵ This school building was on the east side of Fall Creek about a quarter of a mile south of the present bridge at Thirty-eighth Street.

"Get your writin lesson."

Then there was a scramble for the writin table. The little ones, of course, didn't write. The master had a copy ready for each scholar. He would give instructions how to hold the pen and how to shape and shade the letters. More attention and more interest was givin to writin than any other study unless it might be spellin.

To recite spellin, the scholars was called out, one at a time, and asked how far they got. That might be as far as you pleased. Then the master had you spell and pronounce from the book. Then he would take the book and pronounce to you, and you spelled.

Readin was gettin up and rattlin off the lesson. Some would read a whole lesson without a pause and in about two breaths. Little attention was given to punctuation. The only corrections was on pronouncin or leavin out or substitutin words. If the master got short of time you might read twice a week, and then again it might be twice a day, just as he felt about it.

Little ones had primers. Their only work was to learn their A, B, C's. About the only time they got to recite was when the master got through with the big scholars in time. Then he would call one up and stand him between his knees. With a pointer he would point out a letter for the scholar to name. Little ones recited all the way from once a day to once a week. In most of the early schools, scholars studied out loud. That sure made a terrible uproar in the room. Some tried to see how much noise they could make. I remember one girl who could drown out any voice in the room when she was gettin her spellin. When she opened up, you'd just as well lay your book down.

Early schoolmasters was mighty strict in some things and used the gad purty often, especially if they was in a bad humor. They wasn't very particular about your lessons or how much you stayed away from school, for they didn't have to bother

with you then. We caught it for a lot of things that struck the master's fancy to give someone a lickin for.

TURNING OUT THE MASTER

While every family recognized Christmas in a religious way, there was no doins at home in the way of givin presents or celebratin the day. We went to school Christmas and New Year's if they fell on a week day, just the same as any other day. But it was a custom, common in all country schools, for the master to give his scholars a treat and a vacation when Christmas come around. No presents was handed out, and there was no such things as candy and oranges. A master's treat was generally the same every Christmas: apples and ginger cakes.

Sometimes a master made no preparation or straight out refused to give a treat. Then it was the custom for the scholars to lock him out or turn him out on Christmas mornin, and keep him out of the schoolhouse until he did agree to treat. This was so much a custom that the trustees and the parents upheld the scholars in such actions. Usually the masters we had was ready on Christmas morning with their treat, and we spent the day eatin apples and ginger cakes, playin games and havin a jolly good time.

Everything had been goin on right well with our school for several years. Then come the fall the trustees had trouble findin a schoolmaster. None showed up in our neighborhood, so they got Mr. Brown to teach. He and his family was among the Marylanders I mentioned before who had moved in over to the east of us. He was also one of the leaders in buildin the new schoolhouse and had taught school back in Maryland. Mr. Brown made a good master, we all liked him, and everything went along all right until Christmas. Us scholars hadn't said anything to him about a treat. He was such a good man we never doubted but what he would be on time with his apples and ginger cake. The day before Christmas we talked of presentin him with an article to sign to make sure what he was

goin to do, but changed our minds and decided to come to the schoolhouse by daybreak and prepare to turn him out if things didn't go our way.

We didn't know that Mr. Brown knew nothin of the Hoosier custom. We was all in the schoolhouse bright and early next mornin, door barred, waitin for him. One of his boys must have got wind of what we was goin to do, for he showed up instead of Mr. Brown and said his pap sent him down to see if what he'd heard was true. We told him it was and to go back and tell his pap he was locked out until he brought a treat. When the boy reported back, Mr. Brown flew into a rage. Mrs. Brown come runnin down to Uncle Ben's and said her husband was carryin on somethin awful, swearin like a sailor, somethin he didn't do, and shakin his fists and sayin no mob could keep him out of his schoolhouse. She said he was loadin his horse pistols also, and would Uncle Ben go up and talk to him. Well, Uncle Ben went back with her and explained to Mr. Brown the way things was done out here and that all he had to do was take a little treat down and give the youngsters a vacation and all would be well. He also hinted that horse pistols was the wrong tools to use in our parts.

Mr. Brown didn't show up on Christmas day, but the next day he was on hand, pleasant as you please, with apples and ginger cake and a jug or two of spruce beer, which was a drink made by these German settlers from the east. We had a fine day of it after all. Mr. Brown held no grudge and seemed to enjoy himself as much as any of us.

The closest we ever come to a real fight was when we turned Mr. Lynch out. He was a big, raw-boned, sandy-haired Irishman, middle-aged and a bachelor. He had a terrible bad temper. When he got mad he would lay on the gad unmercifully. A few days before Christmas we noticed Mr. Lynch goin round and fixin the winders so they could be fastened on the inside. We knew then that he was gettin ready to shut us out if we demanded a treat. We never said a word until the

day before Christmas, then knowin we had a tough customer to deal with, we drew up an article coverin everything we expected the next day and asked him to sign it. He flatly refused and give us to understand that he intended doin nothin. We didn't argue the matter, but us big boys and girls made plans to get to the schoolhouse before daybreak and take possession ahead of Mr. Linch.

Christmas mornin we was all there on time. We built a fire in the fireplace, then we barricaded the door by pilin all the benches up against it. We didn't have to wait long before we saw him comin down the road with his ax on his shoulder and a bunch of kindlin under his arm. He soon saw someone had saved him the trouble of buildin a fire. Mr. Linch stuttered some when he got mad. When he found he couldn't get in and heard us inside, he said:

"Wha- wha- what does this me- mean?"

We told him to come around to the winder and we would tell him. This he did, and we handed him a revised article which called for two bushels of apples and two dozen ginger cakes. We also added to the article that he would not punish any scholar for his part in turnin him out. He give us a dirty look and tore the article to pieces.

"Y- Y- You can go to hell!"

Then he walked around to the door and started on it with his ax and never stopped until he had beat it into kindlin. He never knew that some of us big boys was standin each side of the door armed with a club apiece if he come in usin that ax. When he saw our barricade and that it was useless to break through it, he threw down his ax and started down the road, never sayin a word.

Pap knew all about our plans and about the middle of the forenoon he come down to the schoolhouse to see how the land lay. When he saw the splintered door and heard our story, he got plenty mad.

"Any man who acts like that needs a good lickin."

Pap sent all the small scholars home, but told us bigger ones to stay until the next day. He said he would bring our supper and breakfast to us, and for us to stay and whip the old rascal out. We spent Christmas night at the schoolhouse and until noon the next day, but no Mr. Linch showed up, so we all went home.

In a day or two we got word that Mr. Linch went from the schoolhouse to a cabin about two miles north where they sold whisky. There he stayed a day or so, drinkin and carousin and wound up with a fight. To make matters worse for me, Mr. Linch was boardin at our house at this time. About a week after Christmas he showed up. Pap went to the door and asked him what he wanted. He looked a sight, haggard and holler eyed, and his clothes showed burns where he had been knocked into a fireplace, we supposed. He said he wanted his carpetbag and to cross the crick.

The crick was froze over so we couldn't use the canoe and the ice wasn't thick enough to bear a man's weight. Pap give him his carpetbag and told me to get the gray mare and take him across at the ford, where it wasn't froze over. I was purty shaky when I rode up and told Mr. Linch to mount behind me. When we crossed the crick I knew he would like to drown me for the part I took in turnin him out, but he never opened his head, nor did I. When we got across, he slid off the mare, started down the road and didn't even look back. That was the last any of us ever saw Mr. Linch. That was also the end of school for that term.

Boys and girls could go to school just as long as they wanted to, or as long as they paid for their term. Some would be grown and of age. I think a lot of us kept goin to school more for a pastime and to get away from the monotony of home life than we did for book learnin. I was one of them grownups in the last school I attended. Our schoolmaster was a young man named Gill. He was the most likeable master we ever had, pleasant, agreeable and right smart. He didn't do much lickin

either. Us big scholars thought of him more as a chum than a master. He got so chummy that one of the big girls become "his gal."

Along toward Christmas we begun to wonder what kind of a treat Mr. Gill had in store for us, never once thinkin he would fail us. But to our surprise, the day before Christmas come around and not a word about a treat from Mr. Gill. I always thought he intended to treat us, for he didn't act like other masters had when they took a solid stand against it. I think he wanted to hold out on us just for the sport of it; might be he just wanted to match wits with us and show us how game he was.

Christmas mornin we was all on hand bright and early. Doors and winders was barred. Then we waited for Mr. Gill to come. About the usual time here he come walkin out of the woods into the clearin in front of the schoolhouse. There he stood a while, takin in the situation. I don't think he was fooled much, for he smiled and turned around and started to leave. We was ready for that move by havin one of our best runners standin by the door ready to catch him if he tried to get away. When we caught him, he fought and kicked so bad and give us such a tussle that we had to tie him up and carry him back to the schoolhouse. We presented our article, but he flatly refused to sign it. Some mischievous youngster spoke up.

"Why not take him down to the crick and stuff him under the ice?"

Well, before anybody could say no we was on our way with him tied up as he was. We cut a hole in the ice and threw a couple of rails across it. Then we took his coat off and tied a rope to his feet so we could pull him back before he would drown and laid him on the rails. Before we jerked the rails out from under him we agin asked him if he was ready to sign the article. He said he would drown before he would sign. All of a sudden a voice come from the crick bank.

"Boys, don't do that. That is too exposin."

It was the trustees, who had been watchin us all mornin to see that we didn't go too far in our part of the game. I know I was mighty glad to hear that voice and I think the others was, too. The master almost had us whipped out that time. As for Mr. Gill, I could never figure out how far he would have gone with his part of the game. Sometimes I wonder if he didn't see them trustees before we did and was puttin his trust in them.

We took Mr. Gill off the rails, put his coat back on him and carried him back to the schoolhouse and set him up against a tree while we went inside to consult on our next move. We decided to let the big girls snow ball him a while. That didn't work either, for his gal got to cryin and carryin on so the other girls just quit for feelin sorry for her.

Mr. Gill now demanded that we turn him loose, although he refused to sign our article. I reckon we was just about as determined a bunch of youngsters as you could get together. We was raised by people who was that kind ahead of us. So we refused to let him go.

While we was discussin what to do next, we looked up the road and there come a big drove of hogs on their way to a Ohio River town market. A good many of these hogs was half wild. They had been brought in from the woods, half fattened and full of fight, especially the boars with their long tusks. All at once the thought struck us: why not lay the master out in the road and let the hogs pass over him!

When we laid him in the road we give him another chance to come to our terms. Still he refused, although we noticed he got mighty pale. We backed off and watched as the hogs went by. The first bunch would smell and root him some and go on. Then they wasn't so particular about walkin around him. Finally one of them rough lookin, long-tusked, half-wild boars come up purty close and started pawin the ground, sniffin and chompin his jaws like he was goin to jump right on him. That was more than Mr. Gill could stand. He called to us to come and get him, that he would give us our treat.

It was now noon. School went right on after noon as if nothing unusual had happened. The next day Mr. Gill give us one of the finest treats we ever had. We sure earned it.

CHAPTER 8

EARLY GRIST MILLS

THE little log mills spotted around the county was mighty essential to the settlers. They ground our corn into meal, and I don't reckon we could a got by without corn bread.

All the mills in our part of the county was run by water power. There was two kinds of water wheels. In the overshot wheel the water come down a wooden trough to the top of the wheel and poured into wooden buckets built into the wheel. The weight of the water turned the wheel and then the buckets emptied. For the undershot wheel the water come through a trough to the bottom of the wheel and struck paddles, pushin the wheel around.

The mills used stone burrs and ground mighty slow. It took about an hour to grind a bushel or two of corn, and at that it wasn't much more than finely cracked. There was no money charge for grindin; the miller tolled your grist by takin out one-eighth of the corn for his pay. Sometimes the miller was several days behind with his grindin, and the rule was first come, first served. If a family was out of meal and stood in purty well with the miller, he might take pity on you and slip your grist in ahead of the others. Or you could leave your grist and take another home with you.

Every mill had a big fireplace. In cold weather you was welcome to set by the fire as long as you pleased. Sometimes that would be all day, while you was waitin for your turn. If you got hungry you could go to the hopper and take out a double handful of corn, no matter whose corn it was (that being the custom of the day), put it on the hearth, cover it with ashes and live coals, and you soon had parched corn to nibble on while you was waitin.

In right hard freezin weather a water mill would have to

stop on account of the ice. If the cold spell held on too long, you was likely to run out of meal. Then you had to borrow from the neighbors; that is, if they had any to spare. If you got clear out, you just eat potatoes instead of corn bread. That would happen now and then. You might wonder why a family didn't keep a bigger supply of meal on hand. One reason was two bushels of corn was about all you could get through the trails on a horse's back. Then again the meal would get mouldy in a few weeks. On account of these drawbacks a trip to a mill had to be made about every ten days, or two weeks at the outside, to keep a family supplied.

As soon as a boy was able to ride a horse well, and that was purty young, he was put on top of a two-bushel bag of shelled corn slung across the back of a horse, and would go with his father or big brother to the mill. After he had learned the trails and how to manage his horse and the bag of corn, he had the job of goin to mill regular and alone. I well remember how I felt when Pap would say:

"Well, son, you will have to go to mill today."

I'd have what I called mill pains, I dreaded it so. I was always worried for fear the big homemade linen bag, with the corn held in either end, might catch on a limb or snag and rip open, or the horse would stumble and throw me and the bag off. I wasn't big enough to hoppus the bag up on my shoulder and throw it across the horse's back. Then there was the brush swipin you in the face, and the shyin and snortin of the horse at every wild thing that moved. There was also a chance of comin across a Indun roamin through the woods. Although they was friendly, I dreaded meetin one. Goin to the Hoover Mill the trail passed by a big swamp called the Round Pond.⁶ In the winter your horse would likely break through the ice along the edge and let your bag of corn slip off. That wasn't

⁶ The Hoover Mill was on Crooked Creek, a short distance above its junction with White River. The Round Pond that was passed on the way filled the low ground south of the Crown Hill cemetery underpass beneath Thirty-eighth Street.

the biggest worry there. Panther had been seen comin out of the swamp. When I passed it I almost had a chill. Pap didn't know anything about how I felt. It wasn't any use to complain to him anyhow, for when he said go to the mill, you went!

One mornin Pap started me off for the Whitinger Mill.⁷ I got along all right until I come to a place in the trail where a big tree had blowed over. The roots had pulled out a little and left a mud hole. I started around them on the firm ground. My horse slipped, made a flounce toward them tree roots and jammed one of them through the bag of corn. I lost some of the corn before the thought struck me to jam my old wool hat into the hole. I rode the rest of the way to the mill bareheaded. I had lost just about as much corn as the toll would be. I told Mr. Whitinger about my mishap and how I worried about what I would catch when I got home for bein so careless.

"Now don't you worry," he said. "Go up to my house and have Mrs. Whitinger give you a needle and thread, and I'll mend your sack while your corn is grindin, and your father will never know anything about it."

When I left the mill, he hadn't taken any toll for the grindin, so I felt mighty happy. I never did forget how good he was in fixin me up that way, and Pap never knew anything about the affair either.

Soon after I got to goin to the Mill alone, I was takin a grist to the Hoover Mill, which was almost due west from our cabin on the west side of White River. Where I forded the river the water was about as deep as a horse could get through. There was a island or a big sandbar about the middle of the stream, then on the far side the water was shallow. I was ridin a long-legged black horse we called Black Jack. He was a tricky old rascal, always shyin and humpin at any little thing he didn't take a notion to.

I got my grist and was fordin the river on my way home when old Jack struck that nice-lookin island of soft sand and

⁷ The Whitinger Mill was located north of Broad Ripple on White River.

took a notion to roll in it. In spite of all my jerks and yells he threw me and the bag of meal off and took his roll. I managed to hold on to the reins so he wouldn't get away from me when he got up. But I was in some predicament, a bag of meal on the ground in the middle of the river and me not big enough to get it back on the horse.

Across the river and not far away lived a old shoemaker. But how was I goin to get up on Jack's back to cross the deep water? I tried hookin my toes over his knees and grabbin a handful of his mane to pull myself up, but he was too tall and his long legs too slick. All of a sudden I thought of standin the bag of meal on end and mountin the horse from it. This I did and soon had the old shoemaker back to the island. He put the bag on old Jack, climbed on himself, pulled me up behind, and we come across the deep water. Then I had to pass the Round Pond, where I expected to be eat up by a panther, but I reached home safe and sound. Pap thought that was good trainin for a boy.

I was a good big strap of a boy when Pap started me and my younger brother off right early one mornin to get some grindin done. My brother's horse was loaded with the usual two bushels of corn, but on my horse I had three bushels of wheat in two bags. We had started to raise some wheat and buckwheat by this time. As the country was gettin more settled and there was more grindin to be done, Pap knew that the mills would be purty well crowded. He said for us to go to the Patterson Mill first.⁸

"If they can't do your grindin, go to the Hoover Mill. But don't come home without meal."

It just seemed bad luck was with us that forenoon. I was ridin along thinkin about how we would come out at the Patterson Mill when all of a sudden my horse stumbled and fell, throwin me and the two bags of wheat off and runnin a snag into his chest. After we got him up and found he didn't bleed

⁸ The Patterson Mill was on Fall Creek near its mouth.

or limp much, we reloaded the wheat bags and decided to go on. At the Patterson Mill we found we couldn't get our grist for about two weeks. Then we went to the Hoover Mill and was told it would be three weeks. My horse was gettin a little lame by this time, so we thought we'd better go back home, where we arrived about noon.

Pap was kind of put out and after dinner he loaded my bags of wheat on a fresh horse.

"Go over to the Spring Mill.⁹ If anybody'll do your grindin Seth Bacon will."

We had a new trail to travel, but after windin around dodgin logs and trees for about two miles, we finally reached the new mill. Bacon was at the door when we rode up. Our feathers sure dropped when he said: "I can't do your grindin, boys. I've got grists layin in my mill so long the corn is sproutin."

Which of course was exaggerated. Then he looked us over a bit. "Who's boys are you?"

We told him John Johnson's boys.

He kind of grinned. "Git off, boys, and bring your grists in. Old John must have meal."

He ground my wheat first so I could be boltin it while he ground my brother's corn. Most of the mills at this time had put in small hand-turned bolters so they could handle wheat and buckwheat flour, although they ground all grain on the same stone burr. The bolters was nothing more than a wooden frame cylinder covered with cloth. On the end of the axle was four wooden pins to turn it by. After the wheat was ground, the miller gave you the bag and you climbed a short ladder and poured the grist into a hopper above the bolter. Then you turned the bolter by hand while the grindin run in. The flour sifted out through the cloth into a trough underneath.

"Now son," Mr. Bacon said, "the grist before yours was

⁹ The Spring Mill was located near the top of Crow's Nest Hill on the west side of the road that bears its name. The large spring that turned the overshot wheel flowed out near the top of the ravine that dents the hill.

buckwheat. The man was in a hurry and didn't half bolt it. If you turn long and fast you can get what he left."

That I did and got a big bag of mixed flour and a bag of bran and middlins. We finally got our grists and started home, two happy boys. It had taken us a whole day to get three bushels of wheat and two of corn ground. The flour was purty dark lookin, but mother said it would make bread anyhow.

Mother once told me that about the second year after we come up on Fall Crick (1824) Pap had been so busy buildin a cabin and clearin a patch of ground, he didn't get out much corn that spring. The summer turned out to be awful dry, and what with the wild land, the squirrels and the birds, he didn't get much corn. The few neighbors was in the same fix. Pap heard that the Conner brothers, who lived about eighteen miles north of us, had plenty of corn to sell. They had slipped in early and bought some rich bottom land from the Induns layin along White River; they also put up a right good-sized grist mill.

What to buy the corn with was Pap's next worry, for he didn't have enough money to buy even one bushel. Then the thought struck him he could sell his weddin coat. Them days, if a man had a good store coat he was considered well dressed, even though his britches was nothin more than coarse homespun linen. He went down into Indianapolis and finally run across a young feller who was goin to be married and made a deal, gettin fifteen dollars for the coat. Then he borrowed a canoe from one of the McCormick's down at the village, loaded in some provisions, and started up the river, polin and bushwhackin his way along.

He always thought Conner kinda socked it to him on account of the short crop down our way. He had to pay a dollar a bushel, shuck the corn himself, and carry it on his shoulder about a mile to his canoe. He spent the whole fifteen dollars for fifteen bushels. It was a much easier trip floatin down the river, and he tied up about two miles northwest of our cabin. Then he walked home through the woods, got a horse and made three or four trips bringin the corn home.

Owin to the few mills in our section of the country, Pap took that same corn back to Conner's Mill to get it ground into meal. Considerin the long trip and the time waitin for a grist, Pap would sometimes be gone three or four days, and mighty anxious days and nights they was for mother. He usually loaded two bags of shelled corn, four bushels, on the horse's back and walked himself, leadin the horse. He carried a bag of grub over one shoulder, and his rifle over the other. When mother thought it was about time for Pap to be comin home, she would go out in the clearin in the evenin and start a big bonfire. The light made reflections in the sky that could be seen for miles of a dark night. This was to guide Pap home in the darkness if he would happen to get lost.

CHAPTER 9

HUNTING TALES

HANGIN over the fireplace, or the door, was purty sure to be a flintlock rifle. It wasn't needed to shoot Induns when I first remember anything, but it was mighty essential to furnishin the family with meat. Most every man was handy with a rifle, and some women wasn't so bad either. When a boy was big enough to carry a rifle and knew how to load it, he was allowed to hunt with it. He had to bring in game and kill squirrels by shootin them in the head, or he was told to leave the rifle alone. Old timers didn't believe in wastin powder and lead.

Besides the rifle, the equipment of a hunter was a shot pouch and powder horn. The pouch, about six or eight inches square, made from deer hide with the hair left on, was carried on the right side by a strap runnin over the left shoulder. In this pouch you carried your bullets and patchin. The powder horn was fastened to the same strap and hung over the shot pouch. Hunters took lots of pride in their powder horn. It was made from a cow or ox horn, scraped and polished until it was so thin and clear you could see the powder through it. The small end was fitted with a wood plug, the big end with a block of wood. Up above the powder horn and fastened to the shoulder strap in front was a small scabbard riveted together with lead rivets so as not to dull the edge of the small butcher knife carried in it. Hangin by a short leather thong was the powder charger. It was a measurin cup, made from different things; Pap's was the tip of a deer horn.

This completed the outfit unless you wanted to include the huntin shirt which most men wore. Some liked buckskin all trimmed up with fringe, but mother made ours out of heavy linen. They had a belt and a skirt that come down all around below the hips. Then a short cape was stitched to the neck and

fell over the shoulders to keep out the rain. We would knit fringe out of linen thread and trim the skirt and cape, and run a strip up each sleeve.

Most every hunter had a name for his gun. Long Barrel was the name Pap had give his rifle. The first thing I learned was the proper procedure in loadin. The rifle was set on the ground with the barrel held by the left hand, the charger grasped between the forefinger and thumb of the same hand. With the right hand, pick up the powder horn and pull the plug with your teeth. Pour the powder in the charger and replace the plug. Drop the powder horn and pour the charge of powder down the barrel. Then get the tallered linen patchin out of the shot pouch, put it over the end of the barrel, and push a bullet down on it with your thumb as far as it will go. Draw your butcher knife and cut off the patchin across the end of the barrel. Then push the bullet down against the powder with the ramrod. With the old flintlock rifle there was no cap to bother with. Enough powder would dribble out in the pan to flash when the flint made a spark. If the flint was in bad shape, or the powder in the pan got damp, she wouldn't go off.

Occasionally I got into trouble with mother when she found my shirt tail full of holes, after I had run out of patches and used it as a substitute.

The first time I used a rifle by myself was when I was about twelve or thirteen years old. One day a neighbor come over to get Pap to go turkey huntin. His boy, who was about my size, come along to stay with me. I brought Pap his rifle, but before he started off huntin both men set their guns up against the cabin and put off to the stable to see a new calf. They no sooner got out of sight when the neighbor boy said:

"Let's take their rifles and go out in the dead'nin and shoot somethin."

I didn't know what Pap might say when I got back, but the temptation was too much for me, so away we went to try our luck. The first thing we saw to shoot at was a woodpecker

peckin manfully on the side of a dead tree. I suppose like most boys my chum wanted to saddle the blame on me, for he said: "There's a good mark. Go ahead and shoot him."

Down I went on my knees, restin old Long Barrel on a stump. I pulled the hammer back, took quick aim and pulled the trigger. The woodpecker clinched his claws in the bark of the tree, give a quiver or two and died hangin there. We knocked him down with clubs and then concluded we'd better be getting the rifles back against the cabin. While I was a little uneasy, yet I was right proud when I showed Pap the dead woodpecker, shot through the head.

All Pap said was: "Did you aim at the head?"

"No," I said. "I aimed at the body."

"You did right well. But if you aimed at the body, you should a hit the body."

After that Pap let me take his rifle out when I pleased.

The woods was so full of squirrels that you could get a mess in no time and without goin fur from home. They made right good eatin. We had only one kind then: the gray squirrel. Once in a while I'd see a black one. Fox squirrels was unknown for years. I was grown up before I even saw one. When I shot it, it lodged in the fork of a tree. I was so anxious to see what it looked like that I cut the tree down to get it.

Squirrels was so plentiful that we saved only the choice parts: the hams and the back. We always shot a squirrel in the head so the bullet wouldn't spoil those parts. In the fall we nearly always had a spell of travelin squirrels. We supposed that the mast and nuts that they fed on was scarce in some sections and caused them to move on to other places where they could find somethin to eat.

One fall there was so many passin through they become a pest, makin raids on the corn fields. They come by the thousands for several days. They was so starved and footsore from travelin that they wasn't fit to eat. Pap said somethin had to be done, so he put Uncle Milt and me to patrollin the corn field with our rifles. At night we would mould enough

bullets to keep us shootin all the next day. The squirrels was so hungry they didn't scare very much, but the crack of the rifles helped to keep them up in the trees.

One day I counted eighteen dead squirrels I shot from a tree without changin position or missin a shot. We left so many dead ones on the ground that they actually attracted the buzzards. We saved most of our corn that fall, but some neighbors who didn't patrol their fields had their corn eat up so bad it didn't pay to gather it.

WILD TURKEYS

There was lots of wild turkeys in the woods when I was a boy. They come in mighty handy as a change from venison or other game. Wild turkeys wasn't quite as big as our tame bronze ones, although a big gobbler would dress out sixteen or eighteen pounds. They was almost black in color.

A favorite way of huntin turkeys was with a caller. We made it from the flat bone of the second joint of a turkey wing. It took experience to make "turkey talk" on one of these callers. If you made the wrong sound, the turkeys knew the diff'rence right away and was gone in short order. When you found fresh signs of turkeys in the woods, you got behind a big log and hid yourself. Then by a peculiar suckin sound made on the caller with your mouth, you give three "keouks," imitatin a turkey.

If there was an old gobbler in hearin distance, you'd get three "keouks" for a answer. You call again. After gettin a answer or two, the gobbler would run, with head low, for a short distance, thinkin he was goin to join up with another flock. All his flock would come trailin after him. They would stop, straighten up their heads and wait for another call. Then they would answer and run toward you again. When they was almost near enough for a shot, you lay low and put your mouth close to the ground and give the last call. That made it sound farther away. Then you raise your head and shoulders above the log, take quick aim and fire.

One mornin I spied a flock slowly pickin along in our deadenin, headed toward the woods. I didn't know much about huntin turkeys then. But I saw they was headed toward the crick, so I started to circle them and head them off before they reached the bank and flew across. But they was too fast for me. Just as I was about to give up I heard the leaves rustle off to one side. There I saw a big gobbler waddlin along with his wings draggin and his mouth open. He was so full of feed and so fat he was about give out from runnin, let alone flyin.

I raised my rifle quick as I could, holdin it up by plantin my elbow on my hip, and blazed away. Down went my turkey. I was so excited I threw the gun down and went after him. I stripped some bark from a leatherwood bush with my knife, tied his feet together and swung him over my shoulder, a mighty proud boy. Then I thought of my rifle. A mighty careless thing I'd done when I threw it down and jammed sand in the barrel. What would Pap say! I took my turkey and the rifle back to the house and hung the rifle up in the usual place. After Pap left, mother helped me get the sand out without him ever knowin a thing about it.

I was hunting down along our new ground one time when I saw a flock of turkeys feedin out in our corn field. We had shucked the corn, and they was pickin around on the ground for ears we had missed. I slipped up to a fence corner right easy, rested the barrel of the rifle on a fence rail, and just as I drew a bead on a turkey another one walked right in line behind. The bullet killed the front turkey and went through the back of the other one. He flew straight up about as high as a tree top, then let all holts go and come down "ker plunk" on the ground, dead as a door nail. I had somethin to tell Pap that not many hunters could boast of. I had killed two turkeys with one shot.

Flintlocks was mighty good in their day, but they had a habit of bein tricky at times. You had to keep the flint well trimmed and set or it wouldn't knock a spark in the powder pan. Then you had to keep the powder in the pan dry. If you was shootin at a squirrel in the top of a tree and held the rifle

too straight up, some powder from the pan was likely to slide off and hit you square in the eye just as you drew a bead. A flintlock had a way of makin a flash of fire, a sizz and a splutter, when the flint struck the steel and knocked a spark in the pan right in front of your eyes, makin you bat em when the gun went off.

I asked Pap if we couldn't have one of the new locks put on Long Barrel, where a hammer hit a percussion cap on a tube and done away with the flint. He said to remind him of it the next time he went to town. I did, and the new lock was a great improvement.

PHEASANTS

The best and sweetest meat of all game, and one we never got tired of, was what we called pheasants, but I guess the right name was grouse. They looked a lot like quail, only they was about three times bigger. They made their nests in the leaves under a bush or a pile of brush, the same as wild turkeys did, only a hen pheasant would lay twenty or twenty-five eggs. Some birds, when you disturb their nests, will fly away and make a noise and big fuss. Others will fly around and pitch at you like they wanted to knock your head off. But a pheasant beats them all. As quick as they are disturbed, the little ones will dart under the leaves and hide. The mother will start away, rollin, floppin, jumpin and turnin over and over like she was crazy or had her head cut off. She wants to attract your attention away from the little ones.

The male bird had a peculiar way of gettin up on a log, jerkin his wings and increasin the motion until it made a sound like distant thunder and could be heard a good piece away. Sometimes, when you heard a "drummer," you could knock him over with a club by runnin around him in a big circle, drawin in closer and closer, all the time whistlin or hollerin. The bird just flattens out on the log and draws his head low. He either thinks he is hid, or your runnin and hollerin has

charmed him; I never knew which. When you got close enough you could knock him over with your club.

If you was a good enough shot to hit one in the head, it would drop to the ground and flop and kick worse than any chicken you ever saw. The others seemed spellbound watchin the one on the ground. You could shoot the whole bunch as long as you could keep one kickin on the ground. They would pay no attention to the crack of the rifle. But if you shot one through the body on the first shot and he didn't kick and flop, your shootin was done, for they left right then.

DEER

Deer wasn't hunted so much for sport them days as to furnish fresh meat for the family. Around our settlement the deer was nearly all killed off or scared away when I got big enough to handle a rifle right well. When I was a small chap I used to like to run back in the woods a piece from our cabin and watch the deer when they come around to lick salt where Pap had cut holes in the top of a log and put salt for the cows. Sometimes there would be as high as fifteen or twenty in a drove.

In the earlier days when Pap was busy in the clearin or with the crops, he had a favorite place where he could go in the evenin and most always bring home fresh venison. Near this place Pap made a Indun ladder by fallin a small tree with lots of limbs on it against a big tree, then cuttin the limbs down to a foot in length for steps. In the big tree at the top of his ladder he could set and watch for deer.¹⁰

BEARS

Hardly a fall passed when I was a youngster without hearin of a bear or two bein killed. They wasn't so plentiful as deer and they roamed through the woods by themselves mostly.

One of the most excitin times of my young days was a bear

¹⁰ The "Indun ladder" was in the present loop of street car tracks at the State Fairgrounds. An old cabin on this site had burned, and a barrel of salt in the ruins attracted deer as a salt lick.

chase that started from our corn field. It was in the early fall just after roastin-ear time. Pap was laid up with a bad case of the agur. Mother come in one evenin and said she heard a breakin and a snappin of corn stalks, like somethin was down in the field.

Pap didn't say much about it, just kind of turned it off. In a night or two mother heard the corn stalks a crackin again and called us children out to listen. We could hear it plain. We run in and told Pap about it agin. He said it might be our old cow had broke into the field, or it could be a bear. Pap felt too bad to go down to the field next mornin, so he sent us children down.

Well, we reported back the fence wasn't down, so the cow couldn't get in. Pap wanted to know then if the corn was broke down in little patches. We said it was, and that somethin had gone around and took a bite out of a punkin here and there.

"That was a bear done that," Pap said. "Them patches of corn broken down was where the bear set down and reached out to pull the stalks to him."

As soon as he felt better Pap said he would get Uncle Tom to come up, and they would give that bear a chase. In a few days he sent me after Uncle Tom, who brought his rifle, Old Crowbar, and his hound dog Cump, short for Tecumseh. They took old Cump down in the corn field and put him on the trail of the bear. The old hound knew his business. He snorted and sniffed and circled around and finally started off almost straight west, head to the ground, lettin out a short bay now and then. The men follered.

After an hour or so old Cump, who had got some distance ahead, give out a long deep bay. That meant he had caught up with the bear and routed him out of his den. Soon after the hunters heard old Cump bayin like he meant business off to the south, headed toward the crick. All mornin mother and us children had been listenin to old Cump's bays until they died out toward the west. Toward noon she walked to the door again.

"Listen, children, I believe I hear old Cump agin, and he's headed this way!"

The bear had turned east at the crick. Pap and Uncle Tom had cut back as fast as they could, but he had too much start on them. We all lined up with mother on the post and rail fence in front of the cabin and waited. Directly mother yelled: "There he comes!" Well, I think our eyes bugged out till you could a snared em with a grapevine, we was so excited.

That old bear was lopin along throwin his front feet to one side and then to the other, lookin like he was gettin purty tired. There come old Cump right behind, tongue out and bayin his best. Mother raised up on the fence, cupped her hands to her mouth and give the old hound a long encouragin "Whoop—ee—ee!"

He surely understood her, for he charged right in and seized the bear by the ham. Down went bear and dog in a heap. When they come up the bear was reachin out and strikin at old Cump with all his might, but the hound was back out of reach. Mother let out another whoop, and old Cump charged right in again and jumped back out of danger as before. Both bear and dog then disappeared in the woods, and old Cump's bays got fainter and fainter in the distance.

Mother said it wouldn't be long until Cump made the bear take to a tree. Pap and Uncle Tom come trailin along, both out a breath. Cump chased the bear about a mile north of our cabin and sure enough put him up a tree. Accordin to huntin rules them days, Uncle Tom got first shot at the bear because he was first to come on the game. When Pap come up, he said:

"John, I'm goin to shoot him in the stickin place. You watch and notice if he nods his head when I fire."

The nod would be a sure sign that he got his death shot. Uncle Tom fired, and sure enough the bear nodded his head. He made a few kicks, tumbled out of the fork in the big oak tree, and fell end over end to the ground. He was so fat he busted open on the side when he hit. Uncle Tom stayed with

the bear while Pap come home after the oxen and a cart to haul him in.

Pap let me go back with him. After cuttin and slashin through the brush he got the cart backed around so they could roll the bear on. Pap told me to break a switch off and keep cuttin the oxen over the head with it and keep yellin "Whoa" so they wouldn't get a sniff of the bear or see it. If they had, they'd a gone through the woods in no time. Oxen couldn't stand the looks or smell of a bear, dead or alive.

Well, we skinned and dressed the bear, and the whole neighborhood had bear meat for a change.¹¹

COON HUNTING

I don't think I ever knew anyone who liked to hunt coons better than Uncle Milt did. He was Pap's youngest brother. He worked for Pap and never wanted any land of his own. When he got married, Pap built a cabin up on the north end of our place for Aunt Polly and him, and there they lived until Pap died.

Uncle Milt was diff'rent in many ways from other men in the settlement. He never seemed to worry about anything. He liked to boast a little, especially about his hound dogs, and when in a crowd he liked to be noticed. But everybody liked him, and men would listen to him jist to hear his funny remarks and sayins. When he went to town to sell his hides, he would dress up in his buckskin huntin shirt and leggins, all trimmed with fringe, put on his moccasins and coonskin cap with the tail hangin down in back, throw his shot pouch and powder horn over his shoulder with the huntin knife showin plain. Then he would get on his old mare, lay his rifle across the saddle in front of him, load the hides on behind, and parade around town the good part of the day before sellin em.

¹¹ The bear's trail was picked up near the present Teepee Restaurant and led westerly in line with Thirty-eighth Street to Boulevard Place, where Cump routed the bear and chased it southeast toward the present Marott Hotel. At Fall Creek it turned upstream along the Boulevard back to the Fairgrounds and on north about a mile.

On one of his trips to town he noticed a covered wagon in front of a store with a man standin along side. What caught Uncle Milt's eye was the hound dog layin underneath the wagon. He took a fancy to the dog right away and asked the traveler if he would sell or trade him.

"No, sir," answered the traveler. "He haint for sale. Mister, there jist haint no better hound than that dog, Rock."

If he had said the dog was no good, Uncle Milt might have gone on. But he hung around, kept on parleyin and braggin about his own hounds, determined to make a deal. Finally the traveler said:

"Tell you what I'll do, stranger. If you can git that dog out from under the wagon, he's yours."

That was a challenge and good enough for Uncle Milt. He took off his coat, unbuttoned one of his galluses, and crawled under the wagon. Well, such a snappin and yelpin and kickin up of dust, you never saw. Sometimes Uncle Milt would be on top, then it would be the hound. Finally Uncle Milt got astraddle the dog and tied his gallus around his neck. Then he come out draggin the hound after him. Uncle Milt was bit up purty bad and bleedin some, his shirt was tore quite off, and he was covered with dirt. But he had his hound and he had showed the bystanders the kind of grit he was made of. He walked away leadin his dog, not sayin a word or even lookin at the traveler. Rock turned out to be one of the best hounds Uncle Milt ever owned.

In the fall season when the fur was good and the weather suited him, Uncle Milt was likely to show up at our cabin most any evenin with his hounds and get me to go coon huntin with him. I liked to go about as much as he did. Besides, money was mighty scarce and we got fifty cents to a dollar for a hide.

If it was a fit night it wouldn't be long till we'd hear the long gentle bay which told us the hounds had picked up a trail. Then we would hurry along listenin for the quick yelps that meant they had treed the coon. If the moon was shinin at all, we would move around the tree where the dogs was until we

got between the coon and the moon, and his eyes would shine out. Then a good shot would bring him down. On dark nights we made torches before startin out by splittin strips out of dry straight-grained clapboards and tyin the strips into bundles as big as your arm. We would light one end in the fireplace and let it blaze then blow it out. A torch of that kind would burn slow for hours. If we wanted a light, we'd just swing the torch through the air a few times and it would pop out into a blaze.

If we couldn't see the coon in the firelight, we chopped down the tree. It was worth all the work just to see the dogs fight that coon when the tree fell. Some of our best catches would run as high as six or eight coons in a night.

We filled our pockets with parched corn before startin out. Then if we got lost—which we did many a time—we didn't worry about it nor did the folks at home. We would make a bed in some dry leaves alongside a big log, build a fire out in front and sleep until daylight. About the only thing that would bother us would be the flyin squirrels, squeakin and flyin around. We knew no panther would venture near our fire. When daylight come, we could get our bearins by the sun or the moss on trees and start for home.

FISHING

We never done much fishin with a line. If we wanted a mess of fish we used a spear or gig. One of us would paddle a canoe, and the other would stand in the bow with the gig. Most of the fish we got was red horse, black suckers, salmon, and once in a while a pike.

There was no law against usin a seine, so one winter Pap knit one out of strong linen thread that was sixty yards long. This was after some roads was made. Pap and us boys and some of our neighbors took a couple of wagons with empty barrels and some salt, our grub and this seine, and we drove up White River about twenty miles. We started seinin down the river. When evenin come we would camp, clean and salt down

the fish we had caught. We fished for three days that way. When we got home each family had a good supply of fish for winter use.

Pap always kept a good canoe. It was not only used for fishin but also for crossin Fall Crick. Anybody who wanted to cross was at liberty to use our canoe. Many times we would get a call from the other side of the crick to bring the canoe over. We never thought that any trouble, nor did we ever take any pay.

Pap made our canoes out of half of a big poplar log, or half log split lengthwise. He would shape up the outside with his ax and a adz, just by the eye, until it suited him. Then he bored a row of half-inch holes along the bottom, two rows on each side, and another row near the top edge. Out of dry walnut he cut a lot of half-inch pins, some two and a half inches long, some shorter. They was driven in tight and flush with the outside. Then as he chopped out the inside wood he'd come to the ends of the pin and know he'd cut far enough. The sides and bottom were two to two and a half inches thick when got through. The outside of the canoe was then gone over with a plane and smoothed up. That made a job that would take the eye of any Indun.

CHAPTER 10

FIGHTS AND SHOOTING MATCHES

ACCORDIN to their agreement, the Induns all moved out of these parts the year before we moved in. For a few years after, a band would come through, just travelin or movin, nobody knew which. They crossed the crick below our cabin and used our canoe, loafin around most of the day. The squaws would come up to the cabin and want to trade with mother. She could get a pair of moccasins just by fillin them with shelled corn. The bucks liked to trade horses.

They give us a scare once over a horse trade with a settler who lived up the crick from us. One mornin bright and early a man rode up to our cabin and told Pap to get his rifle and ride up to this settler's cabin as quick as he could, as some Induns up there acted like they was goin to make trouble. When Pap got up there he found six or eight other men already there.

This settler had traded horses a few days back with some Induns. They had just brought the horse back, declarin that the man had cheated them and they wanted a settlement. No doubt if the truth was known they was in the right. But this settler told them to get out, that a trade was a trade. They parleyed around a while and then went down below the cabin and camped for the night on the bank of the crick. Next mornin they got out in plain view of the cabin and put on a war dance, swingin their tommyhawks, whoopin and circlin around. After their dance they all squatted down in a circle. That's the way they was when Pap come up. The men decided to walk out in plain view with their rifles on their arms and see if a show of fight wouldn't drive the Induns away. The settlers didn't want any trouble if they could avoid it. Well, the Induns didn't stay long after they saw these armed men, but broke camp and put out through the woods. Pap come home wearin his scalp, and we was mighty relieved.

I never could make out just where the old timers got all that fightin spirit, whether it come up with them from the South, from their Scotch and Irish mixture, or from livin in a wild part of the country. The gentleman class of the early days got satisfaction by usin swords and pistols, but the common class that settled the land in these parts had more sense and used their fists. Fights was right common when I was young. Fists would start flyin over triflin matters. Any kind of fightin went: kickin, bitin or scratchin, but woe unto the man who tried to use a knife or anything but his bare hands. A fight was allowed to go on until one or the other cried "Nuff." Then each man's friends helped him brush the dirt off and get his coat on, and the affair was settled. Sometimes the two men would shake hands. If there was a bar near, the winner usually treated the crowd to a round of drinks.

One time I was watchin a fight when the big feller knocked the smaller man down, jumped on him and was pummelin him for all that was in it. Suddenly the big feller throwed his head up and hollered.

"Nuff! Nuff! Take him off!"

When their friends parted them, they found that the man who was down had the big chap's thumb in his mouth and was grindin on it like a dog with a bone. I remember another fight when the man underneath pulled the top man down and bit off a big chunk of his ear.

Pap wouldn't pick a fight, but he just couldn't stand around and see a imposition of any kind. Maybe his Scotch-Irish temper had somethin to do with it. One of his fights took place down at Indianapolis, where he went to vote. All the county voted at the same place then. The Whigs had clustered up around the votin winder and kind a took over matters and wouldn't let the Democrats in. When a Whig come up they would pass him over their shoulders to the winder so he could vote.

I reckon Pap's politics sort a worked down in his fists, for he watched what they was doin for a while. When they passed

up a genteel dressed Whig in his long coat tail in front of Pap, he just grabbed it and yanked back, splittin it clear to the neck. The man landed on the ground on his back. Somebody in the crowd took it up and told Pap to step out and he would give him a lickin. Well, the men formed a ring and the fight was on. Pap licked his man without much trouble. Then he hunted up a justice of the peace and asked him how much his fine would be.

"Reckon I'll have to fine you five dollars for breakin the peace," the squire said.

When Pap reached in his pocket to pay, five of his friends stepped up and put up a dollar a piece.

The hardest fight Pap ever had was at a auction sale. I reckon I was about eight or nine years old. We hadn't been there long when one of Pap's friends told him there was a bully at the sale who come from up northeast several miles. A bully was a big feller who wanted to fight anybody for the least cause, just to show off.

Several times he sauntered around close to Pap, talkin big and loud, but Pap never paid any attention to him. As he passed by an old man who was walkin with a cane, he almost knocked the old feller down.

"Why don't you watch where you're goin?" said the old man.

"Why don't you get out of the way if you don't want to get run over," said the bully.

Pap heard the whole thing. Turning to the bully he said:

"If you want to run over somebody, why don't you pick out a man your own age and not an old crippled feller."

That was what the bully wanted, so he said: "You want to take it up, do you?"

Pap come right back with, "Yes, if that's the way you want it."

I got mighty scared and weak when Pap left me. Both men took off their coats, a ring was formed and they was at it before you could say Jack. They walked up toe to toe and

stood there bangin away right and left. I saw Pap drop to his knees and I thought he was done for, but he got up and waded in harder than before. Then the bully went down, and Pap dropped on him, feedin in the licks with both fists. It wasn't long until the bully said "Nuff."

Pap let him up, and both men went to get their coats. The bully just couldn't take it, for he all of a sudden broke away from his friends and made a lunge for Pap. He would have knocked him head over heels if Pap's friends hadn't pushed him out of the way. The bully kept on goin, but Pap was after him like a whirlwind. He was sure mad now. Both men went at it again, until Pap knocked him down. Then he jumped astraddle of him and started tuckin in them licks on his ribs. The bully didn't holler "Nuff." When the crowd thought he'd had enough, they pulled Pap off. Then they found out why he didn't holler. He was clean out and couldn't.

Well, Pap was purty much out of wind but not skinned up much. As for the bully, he had to be carried to a wagon and hauled home. Pap was right uneasy for several days after for fear the feller might die, but he didn't.¹²

SHOOTING A MARK

Shootin matches was mostly for beef and turkeys, although I have seen hogs put up for prizes. Anybody who had a fat two- or three-year-old steer or heifer to spare could put on a match. Notice would be spread around of the date, and the best shots in the neighborhood, and a lot who wasn't so good, would show up. If it was a cold day, a big log heap would be burnin to warm by.

Before the match the men would be shown the beef and a price set on it. The value on foot was around fifteen or eighteen dollars. A shot cost ten cents. The shooters then bought shots until the man was paid for his beef.

¹² The place where the fight occurred was between Illinois Street and White River, about three or four hundred yards south of the Crow's Nest bridge.

The first center shot got choice of a hind quarter. The second center shot drew the other hind quarter. Third and fourth centers, the fore quarters. Fifth center drew the hide and taller. Once I saw a marksman make the five best shots and drive off the beef alive!

Each shooter made his own target. He burned a clapboard on one side until it was well charred and then cut a big cross in it. The intersection of the lines was the center. Because you couldn't see the cross at a distance, a white paper mark was pinned over the cross, the tack right in the center of the cross. Some papers was round, some square, but the best one was a square piece with a notch cut out like the letter V upside down, the point of the notch comin up to the center tack. This notch helped a lot when you brought the sights of your rifle up into the fork toward the center.

Two distances was marked off: forty yards for offhand shootin, and sixty yards for a dead rest. Judges was generally chosen from old men or those who didn't care to shoot. There was no system about turns. Each shot when he felt like it. He just called for his target, and the judge set it up against a tree. After all the shootin was done, the judges laid out the boards in a row and called off the closest shots.

They was always some men that didn't shoot but just come to be adoin, who would dress the beef and have it ready. They got the first two ribs on each side for their work. Other times the beef wasn't killed until the match was over, then all hands helped.

Zach Collins and Noah Flood lived neighbors to each other. They was both good shots and they had a little show they liked to put on after a match that kind of finished up the day. They would take turns holdin a clapboard target between their knees, while the other man stood off forty yards and offhand shot at the center mark. When the rifle cracked, the clapboard would go flyin like it was hit with a hammer. They didn't show any more concern than when they was shootin for turkeys. Their little act always drew a big cheer from the men.

At a turkey match no target was used. The shootin was done at the turkeys' heads. The bird's feet was tied together and it was placed behind a green log that was just big enough for the head to show above. Shootin was done at the same distance as for beef. The price on turkeys was generally seventy-five cents for hens and a dollar for gobblers. Two judges took charge, placin the turkeys one at a time back of the log. The shooters took turns, firin one shot apiece until the bunch of ten or twelve was killed. About the time you pulled the trigger, the turkey was likely to move his head and you missed, which brought a laugh from the crowd.

Shootin matches finally fizzled out, mainly because somebody would bring a jug of whisky to sell by the drink. Whisky and gunpowder made a bad mix.

CHAPTER 11

THE FIRST COUNTY FAIRS

LONG about the middle 1830's, when the country around the new capital town had got fairly settled up, some of the leadin citizens wanted to do somethin to encourage farmers to take a bigger interest in crops and livestock. So "Uncle Jimmy" Blake, the Fletchers, and a few others¹³ organized a county fair and put up prizes for several different things connected with farms and farmin.

Pap took quite an interest, thought the fairs was a good thing and made several entries. At the first county fair the board offered cash prizes for the ten best fat hogs. While most of the hogs of the early days was more of the razor back or elm-peeler type, two new breeds called the Shaker and the Slifer had been brought in by eastern settlers. Pap liked em purty well and had been raisin em for the last few years. Several weeks before this fair, he put a bunch of em up in a rail pen and shoved the corn to em until they was good and fat. They was all white and weighed about three hundred pounds apiece.

I had the job of drivin ten of them hogs the five miles to the courthouse square. I started the day before they was to be judged, so I could go slow and not get em hot or drive any of the weight off. The first day I only made Uncle Tom's place, where I put em up. The second day I made the square only to find the fair board had no pens ready. I had to herd them until they made some.

¹³ James Blake, known to many as "Uncle Jimmy," was active also in movements for the first railroad, the colonization of freed slaves, a state hospital for the insane, and temperance. Calvin Fletcher (1798-1866) was a lawyer from Vermont who settled in Indianapolis in 1821. His brother Stoughton A. Fletcher (1808-1882) came to Indianapolis in 1831 and later opened a private bank. All three men were interested in farming and helped form the Marion County Agricultural Society in 1835. Its first project was to sponsor a county fair. The first fair was held October 30 and 31, 1835.

Well, Pap had no trouble winnin both first and second prizes. He got his money and was mighty well pleased with the fair, the board and ever'body.¹⁴

It was at the second fair, I think, that a prize of ten dollars in gold was offered in a plowin match. Each man enterin was to lay off his land forty rods long, plow two rounds for a starter, then the next two rounds for the prize. Time, neatness, and a even furrow was considered. That ten-dollar gold piece, which was a lot of money in them days, looked mighty good to Pap. He thought he had a right good chance to win, as he had a new Peacock, a cast moldboard breakin plow he had brought back from a trip to Cincinnati. This was the first iron moldboard breakin plow in our neighborhood.

The mornin of the match I helped Pap hitch up Dick and Nell to the wagon, throw in the Peacock plow, and away we went. The fair was held on the courthouse grounds agin, but the plowin contest was on the statehouse ground and "the commons" adjoinin.

Well, when we pulled up and unloaded the Peacock plow, you should a heard the remarks. All but one, and there was some six or seven entered, said, "That settles it. There aint no use tryin to beat old John." They all had wooden moldboard plows, so they withdrew from the contest. The only ones who stayed in was Pap's brother-in-law, Israel Harding, and one other.

"Come on, John," Israel said, "and prepare to do your best plowin."

Pap and Uncle Israel laid off their lands and plowed their two rounds. The three judges gave their instructions and took their places, one at each end and one at the middle of the land. Pap was first to start. He made his first round in good time. When he come to the second, he got a little excited and began to holler at old Nell, his line horse, and no better ever lived.

¹⁴ The Indianapolis *Indiana Journal* of November 6, 1835, lists John Johnson as winning \$12 and \$4 as first and second prizes for hogs, and a hat worth \$5 for the best gelding.

Faster and faster they went until the judges could hardly keep up. Pap's coat tail was flyin in the air. Everybody was hollerin and cheerin like it was a horse race. Pap finished without havin to stop once and clean his plow, even splittin a brick he went so fast. Uncle Israel didn't even have a show with his old wooden plow.

The prize turned out to be a cast plow that was on exhibit by a new firm called the Underwood Company and made right here in Indianapolis. Pap never knew why he didn't get the gold piece, unless they run out. He didn't like the turn of affairs very well, so he offered the plow to anyone who'd take it. A bystander said he would and might trade it off for a coon hound.¹⁵

At this same second fair the board offered a prize of twenty-five dollars in gold for the best cultivated farm in the county. This was somethin new in the way of contests. Pap decided to enter our farm. We made great preparation. The corn was laid by and we had gone over the fields with hoes and cut out all the green sprouts and vines, trimmed around the stumps, and mowed all the fence corners. Not a rail was down from the worm fences. We even pulled all the loose bark off the rails, so it wouldn't look stringy hangin down. We done everything we could to make the farm look neat and shipshape. Pap was just that way about anything he done, being a mighty determined man.

Me and Uncle Milt was plowin for wheat when here come five men on horses ridin up the lane toward us. We knew right away they must be the judges. They stopped and spoke and remarked what a good job of plowin we was doin. We *was* takin extra pains for their benefit. Then Uncle Milt took over in his big way of tellin things and told them all about what we had been doin to dress the place up.

As it was about noon we turned out and took the judges

¹⁵ The *Indiana Journal* of October 15, 1836, lists John Johnson, Israel Harding, and a Mr. Ingold as having competed in the plowing contest for a prize of \$9.00.

up to the house. There we found Pap paintin a new front yard gate he had made. I noticed Pap was mighty friendly to them judges. He told them to get off their horses and come on in for dinner, as it would soon be ready. He ordered Uncle Milt and me to take their horses down to the crick, water them, put them in the stable and give them a good feed.

After dinner the judges looked the place over, got on their horses and left. In their final decision Pap was awarded the prize. I often wondered if mother's dinner had anything to do with it. The same thing happened agin as in the plowin contest: no gold to pay the prize with. Instead, Pap got a Bible, a brass kettle, and a shawl for mother. That huffed Pap quite a little; said he wouldn't try for any more prizes and he never did.

CHAPTER 12

DRIVING HOGS TO THE RIVER

As the years went by we kept cuttin down trees and clearin more ground. That meant more fields and more corn. There wasn't any market for corn then because there wasn't any way to ship it out. Here at home it brought ten cents a bushel; that is, if you could find anybody to buy it. Down on the Ohio River at the bigger towns, like Cincinnati, Lawrenceburg, and Madison, was slaughterhouses that packed pork durin the winter months and sent it down the river by boat to New Orleans. Settlers wasn't long in findin out that feedin hogs and drivin them to these river markets was a good way to sell their corn.

Most of the hogs raised then was rough-lookin, long-legged, long-snouted breed. They had to be that way to walk to the Ohio River. A close-made fat hog wouldn't last one day on such a drive.

Everybody's hogs run loose and growed up in the woods in sort of a half-wild state. Nobody bothered about a shed. They wasn't even fenced in until sellin time. The only care they had was a little corn throwed out of a evenin to keep them in the habit of comin up. Through the day they rooted around through the woods eatin roots and herbs and anything they could find. In the fall we drove them out in a beech thicket, with a pond or swamp nearby where they could get water, put out some salt and left them to feed on the beechnuts for a few weeks. It was surprisin how them nuts would start them to swellin out. Then they was brought in and put in a rail pen and fed all the corn they could eat for a while.

Occasionally a sow would drift off in the woods, have a litter of pigs and wouldn't come up, or we couldn't find her. Her pigs growed up like wild hogs and lived back in the woods.

I remember Pap comin in one time from a huntin trip and tellin how he had to take to a big log when a big half-wild boar chased him. He said he finally had to shoot him before he could get down off that log.

After we got the main herd in, we used to go back in the woods and build a big rail pen. On one side we would make a slip gap by pullin out one end of a rail. Then we put shelled corn in the pen and dribbled out a few long streaks through the woods. Them half-wild hogs would foller the traces of corn up to the pen. After a few baits we would rush up and trap em. After they was fed a while in the pen, we could toll and drive em in and put em with the main herd.

There wasn't many roads leadin out of Indianapolis. For the Ohio River towns you had your choice of the Madison Road or the Brookville Road. About all you could say was that they was roads in name only; jist a lane cut through the woods, with trees and stumps purty well cleared out of the right-of-way, but mighty little gradin done. Swampy places had been corduroyed by rollin logs in side by side until the bog was spanned. Mighty little dirt was put on the logs. A wagon would go thump, thump, thump over them, shakin the daylight out of you. They was only wide enough for one way travel. Durin the winter months these roads got so muddy from wagon wheels, stagecoaches, and hog drivin that they was almost impassable. Yet the winter was the only time we could drive hogs to market, as that was the only time the packin houses was runnin. Even then we could drive only when the ground was soft; hard froze ground cut the hogs' feet.

Several farmers would club together on a drive. Each owner had his hogs earmarked and counted in when the drive started. A drove would be some two or three hundred hogs, sometimes more. Big droves would handle better than small ones; they would stay together and not scatter. A drive was always in charge of a boss who rode a horse. Pap got that job most every time. There was six or eight drivers, dependin on

the size of the herd, who went afoot. Then there was a wagon with four horses and a driver to pick up the hogs that give out.

Dotted along the roads to the river towns was taverns to take care of the public. Most of them was built of logs, though toward the river some was brick. Hangin from rings on a arm stickin out from the buildin was a sign that said: "Public Entertainment by"—then the name of the man who run the tavern. Some taverns was for the stage lines, while others was equipped with yards or open pens for the hog drivers. The drivers was dressed so rough and got so smeared with mud that they wasn't fit to put up at finer places with people that traveled by stagecoach.

Mostly the drivers was young men, sons of the owners of the hogs. They could stand the hard work and the exposure lots better than older men. The boss was generally one of the owners. Us drivers was considered purty good chaps at home, but like most boys when they get away apiece, got to feelin their oats and done things we didn't do at home. One thing sure, we hung together and didn't aim to let anybody put anything over on us. Now and then we run across a tavern-keeper who wasn't the best feller in the world. Some was lookin out for their own interest and not much for the comfort of their patrons. When we hit that kind of a place, we nearly always left with the accounts squared.

The first day out on a drive we would make right good time. After that it was mighty slow work. The hogs wouldn't move so fast when they begun to get tired. It took from fifteen to twenty days to drive them to Cincinnati, dependin on the travelin qualities of the hogs and the condition of the roads. Now and then a hog would give out and just lay down in the mud. Then the wagon drove up, and three or four of us wasted no time a pickin him up, mud and all, and shovin him in till he got rested up. If the wagon was full, the driver went on to our stoppin place, unloaded and come back for more give-out hogs.

Along towards evenin the tavernkeeper ahead would most

likely come ridin up to find out from the boss how many men to expect, how many hogs, and how much corn to put out for the night feed. We never took any corn with us, as that would take another wagon, which didn't pay. We figured it was less expensive to buy it even at the customary high price of fifty cents a bushel at all taverns.

On arrivin at the tavern we drove the hogs in the lot, unloaded the give-out ones, put our horses up and fed them, then went to the house and cleaned up as best we could. We was a sight after a day's drive, covered with mud from head to foot. If it was rainin we was soaked. The tavernkeeper would set out a tub of water and we would take turns standin in it in our boots while others scrubbed the mud off with a broom. We would likely be wet anyhow, so more water didn't damage us much.

After a slug or two of whisky apiece at the bar, we had a supper of hot biscuits with honey or maple syrup and a slab of ham. Then we would set around a blazin big fire in the kitchen fireplace, review the day's work or spin yarns while we dried off. The work was hard and exposin, and we would be dog tired at night, but somehow we liked it and it never seemed to hurt us either. Knowin the next day would be another hard grind, we was off to bed rather early. The boss, who didn't get so muddy and wet, usually got a bed. The drivers slept in beds if they was enough to go around. If they wasn't, and the tavernkeepers managed purty well to be short when mud-spattered hog drivers arrived, we slept on the kitchen floor. We would pull off our boots, spread our comforter or blanket on the floor, roll up some carpet for a piller and sleep with our feet to the fire.

After a early breakfast the boss paid the tavern bill, which was fifty cents a head for the men. The teamster hitched up his horses, we turned out our hogs and was on our way agin.

When we reached the slaughterhouse, a bargain was struck for the hogs which was anywhere from a dollar and fifty cents to two-fifty a hundred pounds, dependin on the quality. Every

hog was weighed alive by catchin it by the ears and swingin it up with a "girty" or surcingle to a big steelyard. All hogs was checked as to marks of owners and accounts of weights kept. The boss collected for the hogs and had charge of the money until he reached home and settled with the owners.

After a day spent in takin in the town and buyin goods to take to home folks, or to a Indianapolis store on order, the wagon was loaded and we was off on the return trip. The drivers walked all the way home, too, which took about five days. We couldn't afford stage fare nor could we ride in the wagon, for the horses had enough load to pull back through the mud without our extra weight. The boss would give us a lift on the home trip by ridin ahead and tyin his horse to a saplin and walkin on. When we come up to the horse a tired driver would ride on a piece, tie the horse agin and walk on. Then another of us would get a chance to ride. We kept this change about goin all day until we pulled into a tavern for the night.

TRANSPORTING WHEAT

When we got to raisin more wheat than we needed for home use, we had to wagon it to the Ohio River to market it. We hauled our wheat to Lawrenceburg; it was the best market and nearest to us. Thirty-seven and a half cents a bushel was the standard price for several years. These wagon trips was made in the fall when the roads was dry. We never aimed to bring back any money. What we got for a load of wheat was spent on supplies needed at home. What we bought at Indianapolis was brought up here by wagon, so we saved by doin our own haulin. We'd buy a bolt of factory for men's shirts, a bolt of calico for women's dresses, perhaps a hundred pounds of sugar, a half sack of coffee, some tea, and always a barrel or two of salt, sometimes a Peacock breakin plow for a neighbor, this bein about the only piece of farm machinery we had to buy.

This haulin to the river and buyin dress goods slowed up

the old spinnin wheel except for spinnin yarn to knit socks and mittens. To make the trip pay still more, we brought back goods for Indianapolis stores on order—groceries, hardware and dry goods, and sometimes drugs.

Our wagon was the schooner-shaped, covered-top kind. The front and back bows flared out makin a sort of hood on each end. A feed box was carried on the back end. It was hooked on the front end when the horses was fed, the tongue of the wagon actin as a stall between the horses. Hangin on the couplin pole was a tar bucket to grease the wooden axles and wheels every mornin. Twenty-five bushel of wheat was considered load enough to pull over dirt roads and up some of the hills we had to contend with. Five or six wagons would make up together; in that way we could help each other in case a wagon got stuck or broke down.

The grub box, loaded on the front end of the wagon, was filled at home with several loaves of bread, perhaps a biled ham, a sack of doughnuts, salt, sugar, coffee, and a few cookin utensils. We camped and got our own meals on the trip. Folded on the top of the grub box was a comforter or two to sleep in. We put timothy hay in the bottom of the wagon for the horses on the return trip; it also made a cushion for the bags of wheat against the continual shakin and joltin. On top of the bags we put hay for the horses on the way down. We also took along a few bags of oats for horse feed, droppin off some of them at taverns to feed on the way back. We made it a point to camp near a tavern or a crick where water was handy.

You got mighty tired of shakin along all day in a wagon, but sittin around that campfire, talkin and jokin and spinnin yarns made you forget all about it, and it seemed like grub never tasted better. At night we crawled up in our wagons, rolled up in the comforters, stretched out on the hay and slept like a log. In the mornin we was up bright and early, fed the horses, scraped together some breakfast, tarred the wagon wheels, hooked up the horses, and was on our way agin. It took about

ten days to make the round trip with wagons. Us young fellers looked forward to a wagon trip to the river for a grand time of bein on our own and livin outdoors like a bunch of gypsies.

CHAPTER 13

HOW I MET YOUR GRANDMOTHER

SETTLERS had a way of makin the most and the best out of what they had at hand. It was surprisin what they could do in the way of hatchin up somethin entertainin. Weddins was the occasion for such a series of several days' general get together, with a rousin good time for all.

If the young man had a piece of land nearby, first thing was to build a cabin for him. Men would gather and in a few days have a new home all ready for the new couple. The only weddin invitations sent out was by the bride's father spreadin the word around that there was goin to be a marriage at his house on a certain evenin. That was all that was necessary. Women folks would gather on that day and begin the preparations for a big supper, after the marryin was over, of roast venison, wild turkey, sometimes roast pig, and everything at hand.

Throughout the day and the evenin the whisky bottle, sugar bowl, and water pitcher set on the table for anyone to help himself whenever he wanted a drink. After supper the room was cleared, the fiddlers took their places and the dancin started. It was likely to continue to well toward mornin, when everybody went home for a little rest and breakfast. Then they got ready for the infare at the groom's house, which was another big dinner and supper. The dancin started agin. Along about midnight most folks would start stringin out for home, while some would stay around all night makin life miserable for the new married couple. Next day they was back for another big feed and more dancin.

For a wind-up of the celebration, when the bride and groom left for their new home, the young chaps had what they called a "race for the bottle." The bride would put a bottle of whisky on the bar post, or gate post, in front of the new cabin. The

young men would line up on their horses at the bride's home and race for it. If the distance was long and over crooked trails full of stumps and brush, you can imagine what a rough and tumble race it was.

In the year 1839, just before I was eighteen, Uncle Ben sold his farm across the crick from us to a New Yorker by the name of Powell Howland and left for Illinois. The Howlands had five children, two girls and three boys. Families that come from anywhere in the East was called Yankees by us older settlers, who come mostly from the South. They was mighty good people, only their ways and their talk was so diff'rent. Some thought the Easterners was kind a stuck up on account of havin more book learnin than we did.

A week or two after this Howland family moved in I sauntered off down to the crick on a bright Sunday afternoon. It could be that them newcomers had somethin to do with it. I was almost to the crick bank when my ears caught the sound of voices and the splashin of canoe paddles in the water. I hunkered down right quick behind a bunch of bushes so nobody could see me, quietly parted the bushes and took a look. There was our canoe with two boys and a gal settin in it. They sure was havin a fine time, gabbin like a bunch of black birds. What just about knocked my eyes out and took my breath was the gal. Right there and then I decided she was the purtiest pink-cheeked chunk of a gal I had ever laid eyes on.

After they passed me I quietly slid back out of sight and headed for home with a heart beatin a new tune. I didn't tell anyone where I had been. How was I goin to break in on the Howland family and get acquainted?

Not many days after, Pap come out of the house wearin his best coat and said he was goin over to pay his respects to the newcomers. When he got back I made it my business to hang around and hear his report. Pap's opinion of matters carried a lot of weight in our family. He said they was a mighty fine and friendly people, that Mr. Howland was a college man but not a bit stuck up. Pap had maneuvered around

until he found that Mr. Howland's politics was the same as his. That made a clincher to a finish with Pap.

I still couldn't figger out how I was goin to break into the Howland family, but the fire was started and couldn't be put out. One day I was helpin Pap do some repair work. He wanted a tool we didn't have, so he asked me to run over to Mr. Howland's and see if I could borrow one. I was off before you could say scat. That day I met Mr. Howland and two of the boys, but not a squint at their sister. I did manage to invite the boys to come over, and they asked me to come back. I was particular to promise to return the tool as soon as we was through with it.

Well, us boys got purty friendly in a short time. On one of my visits I was invited into the house, where I met Mrs. Howland and the daughters. The eldest, Miss Pamela, was the gal I had seen in the canoe. That winter we all attended the same school and got right well acquainted. Later on I started makin Sunday evenin calls on Miss Pamela. Sparkin them days had its difficulties. I was allowed to call every other Sunday evenin only, and I had to leave on the stroke of nine. You couldn't waste any time on the job then.

I was still courtin her in 1842 when Pap come home from town one afternoon and handed me a couple of tickets to a banquet to be held at the Palmer House. He said it was for ex-President Martin Van Buren who would be comin through, and for me to go and take my lady if I wanted to.¹⁶ I rode over to the Howland home early on the evenin of the affair, helped Miss Pamela get her horse ready, and down the road we went headed for a high time.

We felt right important settin there in the presence of an ex-President and the quality of Indianapolis listenin to flowery

¹⁶ President Martin Van Buren was defeated for re-election by William Henry Harrison in 1840. He toured the West in 1842 and visited Indianapolis on June 11 and 12. On the following day, as he resumed his journey toward Terre Haute, his carriage was upset on the muddy National Road near Plainfield. The Palmer House stood on the southeast corner of Illinois and Washington streets.

speeches. Toward the end of the banquet I noticed the waiters was passin plates, and the gents was droppin their dollars in to pay for their meal. I almost froze in my chair. I was green enough to think the banquet was free. I didn't have a dollar with me, nor any other place for that matter. There was only one thing to do: break away from the table and make a clean breast of the matter to Mr. Parker and tell him I would be down the next day and settle. He was mighty nice to me, said he knew my Pap, and to tell him to send down twenty bushels of corn and that would settle the bill. When I broke the news to Pap the next mornin, he was furious. Said he thought it was an imposition to present a person somethin and then charge him for the privilege. But I delivered the corn next day, as I had promised.

When I plucked up courage enough to ask Mr. Howland for his daughter's hand, I also told him my predicament. I didn't have a dollar to my name; all I had was good health and a strong pair of hands. He surely had a lot of confidence in me, for he said not to let that disturb my mind, that he wanted me to take charge of his farm, as he was busy enough with his orchards and other matters. He said we could live right in the home with them, and I could farm his place on shares.

Poor Pap! He got mighty upset when he heard I was goin to leave him after I was married. He didn't say anything, but he acted purty glum. Me bein the oldest boy, I had been takin the farm over the last few years, which relieved Pap more than I realized. I had helped with the work without a cent of wages, which I expected, knowin Pap had all the expense he could take care of with our big family.

In the fall of 1843 we was married. The Howlands put on a nice weddin for us, eastern style. There was no lickor or races for the bottle at our affair. I managed to buy a new coat that cost twelve dollars; my britches and boots and the rest of my gear was in purty good shape. I was so conscious of my backwoods ways I wasn't sure I could go through with

the ceremony. Many of the guests was people from town, friends of the Howlands and strangers to me.

The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, a young preacher from Indianapolis, tied the knot.¹⁷ I well remember the advice he give us that evenin as he was leavin. To my new wife he said:

"If you ever catch your husband comin in the house actin glum and out a fix, start singing the gayest tune you know and don't say a word to him."

To me he said: "If you come in from work and find her with her sunbonnet pulled as far forward as she can get it, whistle a soft tune and don't open your head to her."

Parson Beecher was a lot diff'rent from most of the preachers at that time. He believed in mixin happiness and a good time with religion. He made a lot of friends with his style of preachin, especially with the young folks.

A few days after our weddin I ventured home to see mother and find out how the land lay with Pap. Mother as always was glad to see me. She said Pap seemed to be right bad upset, but she thought he would get over it in time. With all his quick Scotch temper and his harsh ways, Pap had a mighty big tender heart. It wasn't long till he was his old self, tradin work across the crick with me and doin all he could to be a real father and father-in-law.

I farmed Father Howland's place three years. When we left, we moved to an eighty of our own.¹⁸ There we started raisin a family and livin a life.

¹⁷ The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, later to gain such fame in New York, had come to the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis from Lawrenceburg in 1839.

¹⁸ Oliver Johnson soon moved to 160 acres originally taken up by Daniel McDonald. It was bound by modern Central Avenue and the Monon Railroad, between Forty-second and Forty-sixth streets. There he had built a frame house by New England artisans. It was considered for many years the finest farmhouse in Marion County. The farm ultimately was subdivided into city lots, the area being named Johnson's Woods. In 1920 the farmhouse was purchased, turned around to face Park Avenue, remodeled, and given the number 4456.

ABOUT THE WRITER

IF Oliver Johnson (1821-1907) is to be considered the author of this narrative, he is so by the grace of his grandson, Howard Johnson, the writer.

As indicated in his Introduction, Howard Johnson was born in Indianapolis in 1873. He grew up and attended grade school at the corner of Central Avenue and Forty-sixth Street, and high school at North Indianapolis. Married in 1894 to Minnie C. Fessler, he moved into his grandfather's house and took over management of the farm. Thirteen years later he moved on to his own farm at Seventy-ninth Street, between Hoover and Ditch roads. There his father died in 1940 at the age of ninety, and a year later his wife passed away.

Although Mr. Johnson has given up active farm work, he is by no means idle. He keeps a garden, reads, fishes, and does wood working. In 1947 he built a cabin cruiser. A few years ago he felled trees and built himself a log cabin, with a stone fireplace, for picnic use and recreation. His daughter and family live with him, and he has a cocker spaniel and a pet crow. "While I have lived with nature all my life, I never grow tired of it," he says. "I love the trees, the birds, and all wild things. I still like to slip away from the house with my little dog, Brownie, walk down through the fields where she may chase a rabbit or two, then on to the woods where I can prow around the cabin with all nature and lose myself."

Mr. Johnson and his story were brought to the attention of the Indiana Historical Society by Albert Fessler, nephew of Mr. Johnson and his frequent companion. The secretary, editor, and librarian have been guests at the cabin and are satisfied with the accuracy and authenticity of Mr. Johnson's stories from his grandfather. The Publications Committee felt that the membership would enjoy sharing them in this form.

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